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# A Novel Form of Product Placement? The Use of Fashion Brand Names in British Chick Lit

Barbara Waters

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

November 2021

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# Abstract

Several studies have noted the frequent use of fashion brand names in contemporary fiction, but to date there has been little academic research into this phenomenon and the effect that it has on the reader. This study therefore set out to address this research gap. Focusing specifically on chick lit (a type of contemporary popular fiction, typically featuring and aimed at young women), the present study aimed to explore the use of fashion brand names in women's fiction, concentrating on the relationships between fashion brands, authors, fictitious characters and readers, with a view to establishing whether there might be potential commercial benefits of fashion brand product placement in chick lit novels.

A mixed methods approach was used to explore the topic from multiple perspectives. A summative content analysis was undertaken to investigate the frequency, variety and types of fashion brand names used in a corpus of 19 chick lit novels drawn from the *Bridget Jones, Shopaholic* and *I Heart* series. A qualitative analysis of the novels in the corpus focused on the ways in which the characters interacted with fashion brands in the text. An online survey of 166 chick lit authors was used to explore why writers use fashion brand names in their work, and a survey of 96 female students was used to investigate readers' response to fashion brand names in novels.

The study findings indicated that chick lit authors use fashion brand names to support characterisation due to the ability of fashion brands to express the values, self-concepts and stereotypes of their typical brand users. The outcomes of the consumer survey suggested that readers use textual cues, including those related to fashion consumption, to help them to develop their impressions of characters in novels, however the study was unable to demonstrate a clear relationship between readers' perceptions of character personality and brand personality.

In terms of product placement, the findings confirmed that readers demonstrated high levels of recall and recognition of fashion brand names used in chick lit narratives, but no evidence was found to indicate that the appearance of brand names in the text had an impact on consumers' brand attitudes. Readers were found to be broadly positive about the use of brand names in novels, indicating that they preferred to see real brands, rather than fictional brands, in books. Readers appeared to have no significant objection to commercial product placement in fiction books, provided that such placements were accompanied by a disclosure. The results of the study therefore provide support for the proposal that chick lit novels are a potential product placement medium for fashion brands seeking to generate brand awareness. The frequent mentions and positive treatment of fashion brand names in chick lit mean that it would be relatively easy to incorporate paid-for placements of fashion brands in chick lit novels without compromising the narrative.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

In January 2019, as she was writing the final book in her popular "I Heart…" series, British chick lit author Lindsey Kelk posted a question on social media, asking readers what aspects of the I Heart books they most remembered:

**Figure 1.1** *Tweet from Lindsey Kelk*

The post received 250 replies (107 on Twitter and 143 on Facebook). Most of the responses featured key characters and memorable scenes; however, 39 of the replies mentioned the protagonist's Marc Jacobs handbag. To put this into context, the protagonist herself (Angela) was mentioned 101 times, her best friend in the story (Jenny) was mentioned 37 times and the romantic lead (Alex) only 35 times. On this evidence it would suggest that the branded handbag was one of the key elements of the stories for readers, second in importance to the protagonist herself.

Detailed descriptions of characters' outfits, including brand names, are a common feature in contemporary women's fiction, and the replies to Kelk's question reveal just how engaged some readers become when reading about branded fashion items, for example:

> *"The first shopping scene in NY – I googled heaps of the exact things she bought to picture them better and first fell in love with Marc Jacobs and leather bags"*
>
> *"I love any of the makeover bits best or the stuff about the clothes ... all of that just sounded so much fun! I always find myself on Pinterest looking up Angela's outfits so I can picture her more clearly and thanks to the detailed descriptions of her shopping it's easy to do that. "*

The replies also illustrate the affective nature of brand name mentions in books, with several readers expressing a desire for a Marc Jacobs bag of their own, e.g.

> *"…and her Marc Jacobs bag…that description just made me lust for one…that lust is still there FYI…"*
>
> *"Also the Marc Jacobs handbags I have coveted ever since"*

Whilst other respondents revealed that the books had led them to make a purchase, e.g.

> *"I love I Heart New York and the Marc Jacobs bag so have just bought myself one too."*
>
> *"I Heart made me buy Marc Jacobs bags"*

This anecdotal evidence suggests that the use of fashion brand names in women's fiction not only helps readers to visualise the characters, but also has an impact on their behaviour as consumers. This observation is echoed by Cooper, Schembri & Miller (2010) who suggest that:

> *"Embedded brands in the text of popular culture give consumers direction in terms of consumption choices."* (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 565)

Several authors have noted the frequent use of fashion brand names in particular genres of contemporary popular fiction (e.g. Sex & Shopping Novels (S. Brown, 1996); Blank Fiction (Annesley, 1998; Arvidsson, 2006); Chick Lit (Dorney, 2004) and Young Adult Fiction (Bullen, 2009; N. R. Johnson, 2010)). Although fashion brand names are frequently used in many types of novels, there has been little academic research into this phenomenon and the effect that it has on the reader. This study therefore sets out to address this gap.

## 1.1 Background and Context

A small number of academics have studied the use of brand names in novels. The seminal study in this area was undertaken by Munroe Friedman, a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Eastern Michigan University. In the early 1980s, he began a ten-year series of studies on commercial influences in literature and culture in the post-war era. He found that samples of popular literary products spanning two countries (USA and UK) and three genres (novels, plays and songs) exhibited increases in the number and variety of brand names used over the period 1945-1978, and in each instance, the same types of brand names, those high on value-expressiveness, appeared most frequently (Friedman, 1991). Friedman's work provided evidence of the way in which brand names rapidly infiltrated language in the post-war period; but he also suggested that this phenomenon indicated a change to the concept of consumer culture, from a culture largely tied to material possessions in general, to one increasingly focused on those possessions with distinctive brand names linked to the values and lifestyles of individual consumers (Friedman, 1991).

Fashion clothing and accessories are items of conspicuous consumption, and are high on the value-expressiveness scale (Auty & Elliott, 2005; M. Kim et al., 2010), therefore it is unsurprising that they

frequently feature in novels where they serve to communicate the values and lifestyles of the characters.

Friedman concluded his study of commercial influences in literature and culture by expressing concerns about the use of brand names in a non-promotional context. He argued that the use of brand names in such a context is less likely to evoke a critical response on the part of consumer audiences, thus leading to "*subtle influences on buying behavior*" (Friedman, 1991, p. 169). He postulated that this could mean more interest in shopping as an activity; more familiarity with individual brand names and thus a greater inclination to buy the products associated with these names.

A number of researchers have investigated the psychological effects of brand mentions in text on the reader, and consequently the effectiveness of novels as a product placement medium. The use of brand names in text has been found to have a positive impact on brand recall, brand recognition (Brennan & McCalman, 2011) and purchase intention (Storm & Stoller, 2014). Accordingly, it has been suggested that marketing managers should explore opportunities for brand placement in books (Brennan & McCalman, 2011; Olsen & Lanseng, 2012). It has also been suggested that the use of literary characters can help in positioning a brand; that novels provide a useful context for demonstrating a brand's usage areas; and that the portrayal of new brands in popular fiction can create brand awareness (Olsen & Lanseng, 2012). Thus, academic research would seem to indicate that novels are an effective product placement medium, however it has been suggested that further research is needed to investigate the extent to which the patronage of leading characters in a novel may condition attitudes towards the brands and products that feature in the story (Brennan & McCalman, 2011).

Global spending on product placement is increasing as marketers seek alternative ways to connect with consumers in an era when media consumption patterns are rapidly evolving (PQ Media, 2012). There is evidence that some brand owners are already using novels as a product placement medium (Nelson, 2004; Petrecca, 2006; N.R. Johnson, 2010), however the way which we read fiction is changing rapidly. The advent of ebooks has opened up new possibilities for sponsored product placement in novels. The ability to link interactive content to brand names in the narrative may make product placement in novels a more attractive proposition for advertisers in future (Alter, 2014; Avramova et al., 2017b).

## 1.2 Aims and Objectives

This project aims to explore the use of fashion brand names in women's popular fiction from a marketing perspective, concentrating on the relationships between fashion brands, authors, fictitious characters and readers.

In addressing this aim, the study will focus on the following objectives:

1. To investigate why authors use fashion brand names in novels.
2. To establish the extent to which fashion brand names are mentioned in selected novels.
3. To critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels.
4. To measure the impact of fashion brand placement in novels in terms of: (i) brand recall; and (ii) brand attitudes
5. To identify reader attitudes towards brand placement in novels
6. To extrapolate the potential commercial benefits of fashion brand product placement in novels.

This research was conducted in the UK, and uses chick lit novels written by British authors as the basis for the study.

## 1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into 12 chapters. This chapter introduces the context of the study and sets out the aims and objectives of the research.

Chapters 2 to 6 contextualise the research by reviewing extant literature relevant to the study. Chapter 2 examines fashion brands and branding; Chapter 3 discusses and provides examples of the use of fashion brand names in novels; Chapter 4 introduces chick lit as a literary genre; Chapter 5 considers characterisation in novels and in particular, the role that fashion brands may play in character construction; and Chapter 6 discusses product placement, focusing on the use and impact of product placements in novels.

Chapter 7 describes the methodology adopted for this study, and the methods employed to collect and analyse the data.

Chapters 8 to 11 report on the findings of the study. Chapter 8 presents the results of a summative content analysis of a corpus of chick lit novels; Chapter 9 provides a qualitative analysis of the same corpus, focusing on the ways in which the characters interact with fashion brands in the narrative; Chapter 10 analyses the results of a survey of chick lit authors; and Chapter 11 analyses the results of a survey of young, female consumers.

Finally, Chapter 12 draws together the various strands of the thesis, discussing the key findings of the study and their theoretical and practical implications.

# Chapter 2: Fashion Brands and Branding

## 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the concept of branding in the context of the fashion sector. It begins by tracing the history, development and purpose of branding, before going on to focus specifically on brand names (the key element of the brand that appears in novels) and the relationship between brands and consumers.

## 2.2 History and Development of Branding

Many authors trace the concept of branding back to early civilizations. Either to makers' marks on ancient pottery (e.g. Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2004; Moore & Reid, 2008) or to brands on livestock (e.g. Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2004; Okonkwo, 2007).

In English, the use of 'brand' to denote a mark of identification, dates back to the seventeenth century, when 'brand' signified a mark made by burning that was "*a mark of ownership impressed on cattle, horses, etc.*" (Oxford University Press, 2015). By the eighteenth century, the meaning of brand as an identifying mark had expanded to include that of "*a trade-mark, whether made by burning or otherwise*" (Oxford University Press, 2015).

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the UK underwent a consumer revolution marked by a significant increase in the consumption of goods such as household furnishings, clothes and personal accessories by consumers from a range of different economic and social backgrounds (Friedman, 1991; Kwass, 2003; McKendrick et al., 1982). Colonialism and global trade were a catalyst for this consumer revolution, leading to the introduction of goods from other countries and cultures into the British market, including the import of inexpensive, colourful printed muslin and calico fabrics from India (McKendrick et al., 1982). Enthusiastic consumer demand for these products stimulated both further foreign imports and developments in domestic mass production to imitate the imported goods, contributing to the industrial revolution of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Berg, 2002). Changes in the market were fuelled by rising prosperity and a growing middle-class, particularly in London (McKendrick et al., 1982), who embraced the idea of luxury and semi-luxury consumption. These new consumers viewed fashion, rather than necessity, as an stimulus for purchasing (Berg, 2002).

Commercial practices developed in response to this consumer revolution, with advertising of goods becoming commonplace; hence there was an increasing need for producers to identify their products through trademarks, or brands. Whilst these early brands performed many of the same functions as

current brands (identifying the origin of the product, conveying information about product quality and playing a critical role for both the end customers and stakeholders in the channel), most lacked the complexity of modern brands (e.g. the addition of meaning, image and personality to the information conveyed about the product) (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Moor, 2007; K. Moore & Reid, 2008). As a result, some authors argue that branding as we understand it today did not really become established until the twentieth century (e.g. Bastos & Levy, 2012; K. Moore & Reid, 2008), however others contend that the techniques of modern branding were already beginning to emerge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, both McKendrick (1982) and Arvidsson (2006) point to the pottery firm Wedgwood & Bentley as helping to shape consumer response to pottery products in the eighteenth century through the use of sophisticated marketing communication and brand management techniques. Similarly, Tungate (2012) argues that the first true fashion brand was Worth, established in Paris in 1858, by Charles Frederick Worth. Although there were other clothing businesses prior to Worth, Worth introduced many of the basic components of a modern fashion brand; these included developing collections in advance of the season, holding biannual fashion shows, the use of live models to present garments to clients, the creation of the fashion label, the development of a marketing strategy based on fashion magazines and mail order, and the establishment of a charismatic brand spokesman in Worth himself (Godart, 2012; Polan & Tredre, 2009; Tungate, 2012).

Real growth in brands began to occur in the early twentieth century. This period was characterised by increasing competition and increasing use of advertising and packaging to promote and add 'values' to products to distinguish them from competitors (Moor, 2007). Growth in branding in the early twentieth century has also been attributed to the growth in media at the time (the availability of nationwide magazines and radio) and hence increased advertising opportunities for brands (Bastos & Levy, 2012; K. Moore & Reid, 2008). The Second World War temporarily slowed this growth; however, the post-war period saw a huge surge in both supply and demand. This phenomenon led to intense competition and renewed proliferation of brands (Bastos & Levy, 2012).

Alongside this proliferation of brands came increased interest in the concept of branding from marketing academics and practitioners. Gardner & Levy (1955) were amongst the first authors to write about the nature of a brand as distinct from a product. They argued that "*a brand name is more than the label employed to differentiate among the manufacturers of a product. It is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes*" (Gardner & Levy, 1955, p. 35), and go on to state that the result of this is an image, character or personality for the brand that may be more important for its status and sales than the tangible elements of the product.

The 1980s was a key decade in the development of branding. Increasing corporate merger and acquisition activity, resulting from new privatisation and deregulation policies in the UK and US, led to significant changes in the size and structure of corporations, which then turned to corporate identity consultants to help shape new identities and communicate these to the market (Moor, 2007). The decade also saw the birth of the 'yuppie' (young, upwardly-mobile professional), a small but culturally significant group of affluent, brand-conscious, young people who devoted themselves to "*consumption in the pursuit of life-style and self-realization"* (Arvidsson, 2006, p. 2). In advertising there was a focus on the creation of image and use of advertising to create brand associations with abstract values and ideas, rather than more tangible product-related features (Arvidsson, 2006; Moor, 2007). In marketing, brand management became the new focus, and brands began to be viewed as corporate assets, with the acquisition of specific brands becoming the impetus for several takeover bids (Moor, 2007). The leveraging of brand assets in the 1980s led to a significant growth in brand extension activity (Arvidsson, 2006; Moor, 2007). In the fashion industry, a number of designer brands, such as Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein and Armani, began to move away from the traditional fashion business model of producing seasonal collections to a more holistic model of producing branded goods. They took advantage of licencing arrangements and outsourcing opportunities to launch a wide range of new products such as fragrance, eyewear and homeware, leading to the concept of lifestyle branding (Arvidsson, 2006; Power & Hauge, 2008).

By the late 1990s, the role of brands had significantly changed from the beginning of the twentieth century. Their importance as indicators of origin, ownership and product quality had been eroded by outsourcing, standardised production practices, quality management systems and consumer protection legislation; however they were now viewed as corporate assets and also had a key role to play in society, as they had become established as a tool by which identity, social relations and shared experience could be construed (Arvidsson, 2006). This is confirmed by Moor (2007), who states:

> *"The ubiquitous application of branding strategies raises fears of cultural homogenization, but the logos, symbols and imagery produced by these techniques have nonetheless already become an important resource for individuals in fashioning a workable identity, and in carving out a sense of place and self within a complex global system."* (Moor, 2007, p. 1)

It is proposed that it is in this context that fashion brand names are used in novels.

## 2.3 What is a Brand Today?

There is no universally accepted definition of a brand. Numerous authors define the term from a range of different perspectives. For example, Brassington & Pettitt (2006, p. 301) suggest that a brand consists of "*any name, design, style, words or symbols... that distinguish one product from another in the eyes of the consumer*". Similarly, Kotler (1997, p. 443) states that a brand is "*a name, term, sign,*

*symbol, design or a combination of these, that identifies the product or services of one seller or group of sellers and differentiates them from those of competitors*". In this perspective a brand is viewed simply as a distinctive name or trademark used to identify and differentiate a product.

However, brands are more than just names or symbols that identify ownership or origin; they represent consumers' perceptions and feelings about a product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Keller (1998, p. 2) suggests that a brand represents "*a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service*". Whilst Kapferer (2012, p. 8) suggests that a brand is "*a name that influences buyers*" through mental associations, and through emotional relationships built up with buyers over a period of time. In this perspective a brand is seen as something constructed by the consumer as well as the brand owner (Power & Hauge, 2008).

The idea that customers have an emotional relationship with brands is important. Kapferer (2012) states that strong brands have an intense emotional component, whilst Gobé (2001, p. 306) argues that a successful brand needs to have human qualities and emotional values in order to create a connection with consumers.

A brand therefore serves to identify and differentiate a product from its competitors, and also represents consumers' perceptions, attitudes and feelings about the product.

## 2.4 Fashion Brands

There is no single, universally accepted definition of 'fashion'. Oscar Wilde (1887) suggested that fashion is "*merely a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months*"; whilst Georgina O'Hara Callan (1998, p. 8) states that "*fashion is a mobile changing reflection of the way we are and the times in which we live*". Easey (2009, p. 3) echoes Callan's definition arguing that "*fashion essentially involves change, defined as a succession of short-term trends or fads. From this standpoint there can be fashions in almost any human activity from medical treatments to popular music*". However, fashion is usually associated with current styles and trends in clothing and related accessories and services. For example, the Oxford Dictionaries (2014a) define 'fashion' as:

> *"[noun] popular or the latest style of clothing, hair, decoration, or behaviour…; [mass noun] the production and marketing of new styles of clothing and cosmetics".*

Thus, a fashion brand is generally considered to be a brand applied to clothing or related products and services. These fashion products typically include clothing, footwear, luggage, 'leather goods' (bags, belts, etc.), perfumes and cosmetics, hair products and services, watches and jewellery. The definition of a fashion brand may also be extended to include retailers of fashion products and media (particularly magazines) which focus on fashion products.

Whilst fashion brands are typically associated with clothing and related products, Tungate (2012 p2) observes that:

> *"Over the past decade or so, fashion has stolen into every corner of the urban landscape. Our mobile phones, our cars, our kitchens, our choice of media and the places where we meet our friends – these, too, have become subject to the vagaries of fashion. It's not enough to wear the clothes; you have to don the lifestyle, too. Fashion brands have encouraged this development by adding their names to a wide variety of objects, fulfilling every imaginable function, and selling them in stores resembling theme parks."*

Thus, fashion brands (those brands which are primarily associated with clothing and related products or services) may also be applied to non-clothing-related products for marketing purposes.

Branding is particularly important in fashion, as fashion products are ephemeral (Barnes, 2013; Posner, 2015). Historically, the fashion industry has worked on a seasonal basis, with two major collections produced each year (Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter), however, the recent rise of fast fashion has seen fashion lifecycles reduced to periods of just a few weeks in many cases, after which the product becomes obsolete (Barnes, 2013). Thus, in fashion, a brand offers continuity to customers; it is not confined to the physical product, which quickly becomes out-dated, but instead has a significance of its own separate to the product (Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Posner, 2015). Although the product range, styles, colours and fabrics may change for every collection, the branding, brand message and brand values remain relatively constant (Posner, 2015).

Branding also assumes particular importance in fashion because fashion products are typically items of conspicuous consumption. Consumers construct their own identity in part through the clothes that they wear. The fashion products that people choose and wear say something about who they are as a person (Campbell, 2012). Brands add values to products. In fashion, these added values are often emotional, and the brands therefore become symbolic devices. Consumers buy fashion brands because they help them to communicate something about themselves to others (Auty & Elliott, 2005; Costantino, 1998). Where consumers identify with a brand, they want to be associated with it through the conspicuous use of its products; and thus, they often demand a 'badge' that can be worn overtly to make a statement about their identity (e.g. logo T shirts). This 'badge-wearing', although not unique to fashion, is an key characteristic of fashion brands (Jackson & Shaw, 2009).

## 2.5 The Purpose of Branding

Building a successful brand can be a long and expensive process, however branding offers benefits to both companies and consumers (Keller, 2013).

From the perspective of the manufacturer or brand owner, brands differentiate a company from its competitors and facilitate positioning within the marketplace (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). Brands also offer a degree of legal protection (Keller, 2013); they enable companies to protect their products against counterfeiting (a major issue for fashion brands). Branding allows companies to convey meaning and messages to consumers, facilitating the communication of intangible product benefits, such as image or status (Jackson & Shaw, 2009), and enabling the development of an emotional connection between the consumer and the brand (Posner, 2015). In addition, branding offers financial benefits to the business (Keller, 2013): brands add value to products, allowing the company to charge a premium for branded merchandise (Posner, 2015); they are a source of competitive advantage and they add value to the company through the generation of brand equity (Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Keller, 2013). Strong brands also allow companies to develop and sell brand extensions, thus securing future income streams for the business (Jackson & Shaw, 2009).

From a consumer perspective, the primary purpose of branding is identification (Posner, 2015). Brands identify the source of a product and help consumers to distinguish the product from its competitors (Keller, 2013). In identifying the source of a product, brands allow consumers to assign responsibility for the product's performance to a particular manufacturer or distributor (Keller, 2013). Thus, branding can simplify choice and reduce risk for consumers – they can identify products which have previously satisfied their needs, or those which have a good reputation, and thus simplify their information search and minimise the risk of purchase (Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Keller, 2013). In addition, brands offer consumers reassurance, a guaranteed level of quality, consistency, reliability and a sense of security and trust (Posner, 2015). Brands represent a promise from the manufacturer or distributor to the consumer (Keller, 2013) and, providing they meet the consumer's expectations and satisfy this promise, they will earn the consumer's loyalty. Brands also act as symbolic devices, allowing consumers to communicate their self-image or status to others through the brands that they use (Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Keller, 2013).

## 2.6 The Brand Name

Brands are composed of a number of elements; these elements are the trademarkable devices, features and characteristics which help to identify and differentiate the brand (Keller, 2013). The main ones include brand names, logos, symbols, characters, spokespeople, slogans, jingles, packaging and signage (Keller, 2013). Other elements may include colours (e.g. Tiffany Blue) and patterns (e.g. Burberry's Check). All brand elements should be chosen to promote brand awareness, create favourable brand associations or generate positive brand evaluations and feelings (Keller, 2013); however, the brand name is probably the most central and significant element of the brand (S. Brown, 2016; Jackson & Shaw, 2009; Keller, 2013). It is often the first point of interaction between the

consumer and the product and can influence consumers' judgement of the product and their subsequent purchase decision (Hillenbrand et al., 2013).

According to Keller (2008, p. 145), an ideal brand name:

> *"…would be easily remembered, highly suggestive of both the product class and the particular benefits that served as the basis of its positioning, inherently fun or interesting, rich with creative potential, transferable to a wide variety of product and geographic settings, enduring in meaning and relevant over time, and strongly protectable both legally and competitively."*

However, Keller acknowledges that it is difficult to choose a brand name, which satisfies all of these criteria.

Brand name properties have been studied by a number of authors. One major area of research concerns the application of sound symbolism and phonetics in relation to brand names. For example, researchers have demonstrated how the phonetic sounds within brand names can infer product attributes (Klink, 2000; Yorkston & Menon, 2004), create meaning (Athaide & Klink, 2012; Klink, 2001); create brand personality (Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2015; Klink & Athaide, 2012; Wu et al., 2013) and influence consumer evaluations of brands (Yorkston & Menon, 2004). Other research in this area has examined global and cross-cultural implications of sound symbolism in brand names (e.g. Athaide & Klink, 2012; Kuehnl & Mantau, 2013; Shrum, Lowrey, Luna, Lerman, & Liu, 2012).

In addition to sound symbolism, semantics may be used to convey the key benefits or associations of the brand. This technique involves embedding existing words or word fragments into the brand name to communicate meaning (Klink, 2001). By doing so, the brand name becomes a shorthand method of communication, allowing consumers to recognise the brand and register its meaning in just a few seconds (Keller, 2013). Thus, the brand name becomes a marketing message in itself, saying something about the nature of the product (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). Research undertaken by Hillenbrand et al. (2013) confirmed that brand names which hint at the key benefits of a product have a positive impact on consumer choice.

In the context of fashion marketing, Jackson and Shaw (2009) draw attention to what they call "bogus brands"; brands which cynically use names referencing fashionable countries or cities, giving them a perceived, and arguably undeserved, quality and design status (Jackson & Shaw, 2009, p. 258). For example, British products which are branded with French or Italian-sounding names, or brand names which include the name of an international fashion city which has no direct association with the brand (e.g. Salford-based brand AX Paris). Such branding techniques are commonly found at the value-end of the market, where the names falsely associate the cheap brand with the high fashion status of a particular country or city (Jackson & Shaw, 2009).

At the upper end of the fashion market, the brand name is often the name of the company's founder and/or principal designer (e.g. Chanel, Alexander McQueen, Paul Smith). Godart (2012) argues that personalisation, through the focus on a named designer or founder, is a central principle of fashion. It is a symbolic phenomenon which helps to create the imaginary and symbolic universe of the brand. Whilst the original founder may no longer be responsible for the design and creation of the garments, the association remains in the mind of the consumer. Brown (2016, p.30) concurs, suggesting that these eponymous brand names "*carry connotations of master craftsmen, the creative artiste herself, busy at work in an untidy atelier*". However, this technique is not confined to the luxury market, the use of the founder's name as the brand also occurs at high street level; for example: Marks & Spencer, L K Bennett and Burton Menswear are all named after the brands' founders. In some cases, companies may use a fictional founder to attach a story to their brand name (for example, *Ted Baker* or *Hollister*).

Fashion brand names are usually company names as well, and as such, tend not to change over time, whilst other elements of the branding mix, such as products, advertising and packaging, may change seasonally. For this reason, the name becomes something to which customers can attach all of their knowledge, experience and feelings about a particular brand (S. Brown, 2016; Jackson & Shaw, 2009).

## 2.7 Brand Identity and Image

Jin & Cedrola (2017, p. 7) claim that "*A brand is born when a name is given and copyrighted*"; however First (2008) argues that, although a new product might have a name and a trademarked logo, it is not yet a brand. She suggests that the material markers of a brand (such as the name and logo) are meaningless without any history, and that it is only over time, as consumers experience and develop ideas about it, that it develops into a brand (First, 2008). Hence, brands are essentially co-created by companies and consumers. Tangible branding elements such as the brand name, logo, advertising, products, packaging and selling environment are created and shaped by the organisation, but brands also rely on the intangible meanings, values and associations ascribed to them by consumers (Posner, 2015).

Brand identity is created by those elements of branding controlled by the organisation (Kapferer, 2012; Posner, 2015; Ross & Harradine, 2011). These elements reflect the way that the company wants consumers to recognise and engage with the brand (Posner, 2015). Each of the outward expressions of the brand (e.g. brand name, logo, product design, advertising, packaging) contributes to building the brand identity; however, it is important to note that consumers will make their own interpretations of each of these elements and therefore form their own impressions of the brand.

The impression of the brand formed by a consumer is referred to as the brand image. From a brand image perspective, a brand may be construed as *"a central node of an associative network constituted*

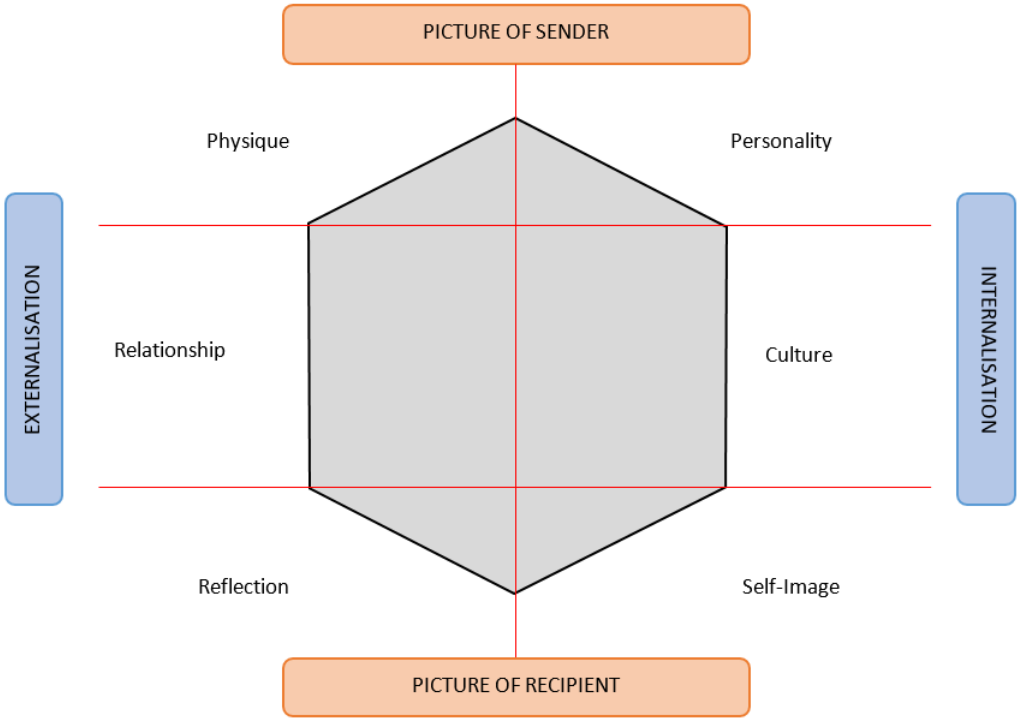
*by consumers' learned connections between the brand and a variety of cues, benefits, user types, and symbolic meanings"* (Thompson, 2004, p. 98). Different consumers may form different images of the brand, depending on their experience and interaction with the brand. For example, a loyal customer of a brand will form their image based on their actual experience with the brand and its products, whereas a non-user may form their image of the brand based on advertising, press coverage and their perceptions of typical brand users (Posner, 2015). Whilst brand image is formed by the consumer rather than the organisation, companies can exert a significant degree of control over brand image through the strategic choices made in their construction of brand identity (Thompson, 2004).

### 2.7.1 Models of Brand Identity

Numerous authors have developed models which attempt to conceptualise and guide decisions about brand identity. For example, Posner (2015) suggests that brand identity is formed from three key constituents: brand essence (the heart and spirit of the brand), brand values (what the brand stands for) and brand personality (a set of human characteristics associated with the brand which define its character); whilst de Chernatony (2008) presents a model which conceptualises the brand's identity in terms of its vision and culture, which drive its positioning, personality and relationships, all of which are then presented to consumers to reflect their actual and aspirational self-images. However, one of the most commonly cited models of brand identity is Kapferer's brand prism (de Chernatony, 2008; Posner, 2015; Ross & Harradine, 2011). This model represents brand identity as being comprised of six facets (physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection and self-image) that enable the organisation to define brand meaning.

In Kapferer's model, brand physique refers to the tangible aspects of the brand, represented by the brand's products, features, symbols and attributes (Kapferer, 2012; Posner, 2015; Ross & Harradine, 2011). Brand personality refers to the unique character, attitude or personality of the brand (Posner, 2015). This facet of brand identity includes the emotional characteristics that evolve from the brand's core values (de Chernatony, 2008; Ross & Harradine, 2011). Culture refers to the brand's distinctive culture and values (Posner, 2015) and is closely related to the organisation's corporate culture, including the values of those staff involved in brand building activities (de Chernatony, 2008). The relationship facet "*defines the mode of conduct that most identifies the brand*" (Kapferer, 2012, p. 162) and relates to the relationship between the brand and the user. It is shaped by the beliefs and associations that people hold about the brand (Posner, 2015). Reflection is the idealised image of the consumer as represented in brand communications. It represents an image of the typical user of the brand (Kapferer, 2012; Posner, 2015). Finally, self-image corresponds to the image that the consumer has of themselves when using the brand (Posner, 2015).

**Figure 2.1** *Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2012, p. 158)*




The model is divided to represent the internal and external facets of the brand. The internal facets (personality, culture and self-image) are the invisible elements representing the spirit of the brand, whilst the external facets (physique, relationship and reflection) are the visible, social elements which give the brand its outward expression (Kapferer, 2012). Similarly the model identifies those facets (physique and personality) which represent the sender (the organisation) and those (reflection and self-image) which represent the receiver (the consumer), whilst the remaining two facets (relationship and culture) bridge the gap between sender and receiver (Kapferer, 2012).

## 2.8 Brand Personality

As illustrated in the models discussed above, brand personality is an important constituent of branding. It can help to differentiate brands and create emotional connections with the consumer (Aaker & Fournier, 1995).

The concept of brand personality can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century, when advertising practitioners commonly used brand personality statements to guide their creative strategy (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Plummer, 1984). Such statements described the brand in terms of its character (e.g. lively, modern, cheerful), rather than its functional properties, and served to ensure that advertising materials conveyed the desired image of the brand.

From an academic perspective, brand personality is usually defined as "*the set of human characteristics associated with a brand*" (Aaker, 1997). In common with Levy (1959), Aaker (1997) suggests that these characteristics may include demographic characteristics such as gender, age and class. Similarly, Sinčić Ćorić & Roglić (2015) state that brand personality is composed of three elements: human demographics (e.g. age, gender, race), lifestyle characteristics (e.g. activities, interests, opinions) and personality traits (e.g. extroversion, sentimentality, dependability). However, other authors disagree; for example, Azoulay & Kapferer (2003) argue that this broad concept of brand personality risks confusing other, conceptually distinct, elements of brand identity with personality; instead they recommend that the concept of brand personality should be analogous to that of human personality and therefore restricted to the "*unique set of human personality traits both applicable and relevant to brands*" (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003, p. 153).

### 2.8.1 Formation and Measurement of Brand Personalities

Consumer perceptions of brand personalities are formed by the association of human traits or characteristics with a particular brand. These associations may result from any contact (direct or indirect) that the consumer has with a brand (Aaker, 1997; Plummer, 1984; Tong et al., 2017) and therefore may be determined by a wide range of factors including product attributes, packaging, pricing, user imagery, advertising, celebrity endorsement, etc. (Plummer, 1984; Tong et al., 2017).

Plummer (1984) makes a clear distinction between the brand personality statement written by marketing practitioners and brand personality profiles based on consumer research, explaining that the former is an expression of how the advertiser would like consumers to feel about the brand, whilst the latter represents the way that consumers actually feel about the brand. In addition, he notes that different groups of consumers may perceive a brand's personality quite differently. Phau & Lau (2001) concur, emphasising the role of consumers in the co-creation of brand personality.

Early practitioner research into brand personalities typically used qualitative approaches and projective techniques to explore consumers' brand associations (Gardner & Levy, 1955; Plummer, 1984); however, more recent academic research has focused on the development of generalised measurement scales identifying key dimensions which may be used to compare brand personalities. One of the first to take this approach was Aaker (1995, 1997). Using a methodology based on trait theory in human psychology, she developed a brand personality inventory based on a list of personality traits derived from academic literature and qualitative research. Factor analysis of this inventory, based on consumer ratings of brands across a range of product categories, resulted in the identification of five key dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness.

Subsequent studies have focused on replicating, applying and validating Aaker's brand personality framework in different contexts. For example, Aaker, Benet-Martínez, & Garolera (2001) conducted a number of studies to compare how brand personality dimensions varied across three cultures (the US, Japan and Spain). They found that three of Aaker's original five personality dimensions (sincerity, excitement and sophistication) also applied to brands in both Japan and Spain, but that a passion dimension replaced competence in Spain and peacefulness replaced ruggedness in both Spain and Japan. Similarly, Davies, Chun, da Silva, & Roper (2001) used Aaker's framework to investigate corporate brand personalities in a UK context, but found that some of the items used in Aaker's scale (such as 'feminine' and 'small town' for sophistication and 'Western' for ruggedness) accounted for low reliability levels, due to cultural and language differences.

In a fashion context, Heine (2010) used a repertory grid methodology to investigate luxury brand personality traits in Germany. He found that German consumers perceived luxury brands to have five distinct personality dimensions: modernity, eccentricity, opulence, elitism and strength. Similarly, Sinčić Ćorić & Roglić (2015) examined brand personality of luxury brands in Croatia. They identified five key dimensions: magnificence, power, eccentricity, modernity and arrogance. Whilst, Tong et al. (2017) used Aaker's methodology to investigate the personality of luxury fashion brands in the US. They found six relevant personality dimensions: prestigious, competent, sociable, unique, snobby and romantic.

Thus, research suggests that brand personality perceptions and dimensions may vary by both product category and cultural context. The numerous studies conducted since the publication of Aaker's original brand personality framework have resulted in the identification of multiple potential brand personality dimensions across a broad range of contexts; however many of the 'new' dimensions identified are similar to those proposed in previous studies (Davies et al., 2018).

### 2.8.2 The Relationship between Brand Personality and Consumer Personality

Another key avenue of research in this area has focused on the relationship between brand personality and consumer personality.

There is a long-held view that possessions contribute to and reflect consumers' personal identities (Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982), and that some possessions (those with symbolic meaning) are more central to the sense of self than others (Belk, 1988). Brands are symbolic devices and therefore may be used by consumers to express their self-image (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Phau & Lau, 2001). Research suggests that favoured brands are congruent with, and therefore reinforce, the consumer's self-concept (Dolich, 1969; Sirgy, 1982). However, consumers also have a significant influence on the way that they perceive the personality of their preferred brands, reinforcing their own personality

dimensions onto those of their preferred brand thus ensuring that their favoured brands become reflections of the self (Phau & Lau, 2001).

The concept of self-congruity is particularly important in fashion marketing, as fashion products are items of conspicuous consumption and are frequently used as a means of self-expression (Mulyanegara & Tsarenko, 2009; Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). Although the concept of self-congruity is well established and generally accepted, empirical research which examines the relationship between consumer and brand personality is often inconclusive (Aaker, 1999; Mulyanegara & Tsarenko, 2009). A key issue is that 'the self' is not a singular concept; for example, many authors make the distinction between the 'actual self' and the 'ideal self' (Dolich, 1969; Phau & Lau, 2001; Sirgy, 1982). In addition, consumers may wish to express different aspects of their personality in different social situations (Aaker, 1999; Schenk & Holman, 1980). Thus different consumption settings or situations may influence consumers' self-congruency with a brand (Aaker, 1999; Phau & Lau, 2001).

The other key issue in self-congruity research is that human and brand personality are different constructs and therefore making direct links between human personality traits and brand personality traits is not necessarily straightforward or appropriate. Human personality may be defined as "*a system of parts that is organized, develops, and is expressed in a person's actions*" (Mayer, 2007). It is often measured using the "Big Five" model which describes an individual's personality by rating it on five dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (McCrea & Costa, 2005). Each dimension consists of a set of correlated traits which are represented as semantic opposites (e.g. conscientiousness = organised, responsible, self-disciplined vs. careless, impulsive). Table 2.1 outlines each of the big five dimensions.

Despite the widespread use of Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework in self-congruity studies, it should be noted that only three of Aaker's brand personality dimensions (excitement, sincerity and competence) directly correlate with the Big Five dimensions (extroversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness) (Aaker, 1997; Mulyanegara & Tsarenko, 2009). It has been suggested that other constructs such as values (Mulyanegara & Tsarenko, 2009) or user-imagery (Parker, 2009) might be better predictors than personality in self-brand similarity studies. Nevertheless, some empirical studies examining the relationship between brand and consumer personality have supported the assertion that there is a relationship between the two constructs (Mulyanegara et al., 2009; Phau & Lau, 2001; Wee, 2004).

In terms of fashion consumer behaviour, several studies have attempted to explore the relationship between consumer personality and fashion choice. McIntyre & Miller (1992) used a measurement scale based on seven fashion personality traits (bashfulness, conformity, snobbishness, social

comparison, sociability, riskiness and self-confidence) to explore the role of social utility in fashion behaviour. They found that selected personality traits moderate behavioural responses to social influence in relation to fashion. Saran, Roy, & Sethuraman (2016) examined the relationships between consumer personality and fashion involvement, impulse buying behaviour, consumer emotions and hedonic consumption in an Indian context. Using the big five personality scale, they found that personality had a significant effect on positive emotions, leading to an indirect effect on fashion involvement. However, Summer, Belleau, & Xu (2006) examined the effect of two personality traits, self-confidence and public self-consciousness, on purchase intention of a controversial luxury apparel product and found no significant relationship between personality and purchase intention in this context.

**Table 2.1** *The Big Five Model (Adapted from Mulyanegara et al., 2009, p. 236)*

| Global domain scales | Traits (low score) | Traits (high score) |
|---|---|---|
| ***Neuroticism (N)*** Assesses adjustment versus emotional instability. Identifies individuals prone to psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or urges and maladaptive coping responses. | Calm, relaxed, unemotional, hardy, secure and self-satisfied. | Worrying, nervous, emotional, insecure, inadequate and hypochondriacal. |
| ***Extroversion (E)*** Assesses quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction, activity level, need for stimulation and capacity for joy. | Reserved, sober, aloof, task-oriented, retiring and quiet | Sociable, active, talkative, person-oriented, optimistic, fun-loving and affectionate. |
| ***Openness (O)*** Assesses proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake; toleration for and exploration of the unfamiliar. | Conventional, down to earth, narrow interests, unartistic and unanalytical | Curious, broad interests, creative, original, imaginative and untraditional. |
| ***Agreeableness (A)*** Assesses the quality of one's interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism in thoughts, feelings and actions. | Cynical, rude, suspicious, uncooperative, vengeful, ruthless, irritable and manipulative | Soft-hearted, good-natured, trusting, helpful, forgiving, gullible and straightforward. |
| ***Conscientiousness (C)*** Assesses the individual's degree of organisation, persistence and motivation in goal-directed behaviour. Contrasts dependable, fastidious people with those who are lackadaisical and sloppy. | Aimless, unreliable, lazy, careless, lax, negligent, weak-willed and hedonistic | Organised, reliable, hard-working, self-disciplined, punctual, scrupulous, neat, ambitious and persevering. |

In terms of the specific relationship between customer personality and fashion brand preference, there is limited empirical research. One study which addresses this issue is that of Mulyanegara et al.

(2009). Working in the context of the Australian young fashion market, they developed their own brand personality scales based on the big five model. After testing with a sample of undergraduate students, four dimensions of brand personality were identified: a trusted brand, corresponding to conscientiousness; a sociable brand, corresponding to neuroticism, openness and agreeableness; an exciting brand, corresponding to extroversion and a sincere brand, corresponding to agreeableness (see Table 2.2 for a summary of the characteristics of each brand personality).

**Table 2.2** *Brand personality dimensions (Mulyanegara et al., 2009, p. 240)*

| Brand Personality | Characteristics | Corresponding Big Five Dimension |
|---|---|---|
| Trusted brand | Trustful, Reliable and Persevering | Conscientiousness |
| Sociable brand | Creative, Friendly and Outgoing | Neuroticism, Openness and Agreeableness |
| Exciting brand | Active, Adventurous and Cool | Extroversion |
| Sincere brand | Simple and Caring | Agreeableness |

They then conducted a regression analysis to test the relationships between self-reported consumer personality and preferred brand personality. The analysis indicated that personality dimensions of neuroticism and conscientiousness led to preferences for trusted brands and that extroversion and openness to experience led to preferences for sociable brands; however, no significant relationship was found between the sincere and exciting brand personalities and any of the big five dimensions. Thus, this study offers some support for the proposition that consumers prefer fashion brands with personalities which are congruent with their own. However, further analysis of the same data generated a different set of results. When gender was taken into account, the relationship between personality and brand personality was found to be significant across all of the brand personality scales, but male and female consumers differed in relation to how they expressed their own personality through fashion brands (Mulyanegara et al., 2009). Table 2.3 below summarises these findings.

**Table 2.3** *Gender differences in brand personality (Mulyanegara et al., 2009, p. 244)*

| Brand Personality | Corresponding Big Five Personality | |
|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female |
| Trusted brand | Neuroticism | Conscientiousness |
| Sociable brand | Extroversion | Openness to Experience |
| Exciting brand | Extroversion | None |
| Sincere brand | Openness to Experience | Extroversion |

Nevertheless, in conclusion, Mulyanegara et al. (2009, p. 244) state that "*personality variables are not strong enough to be reliable predictors of brand preferences*"; however they argue that their findings regarding the relationship between selected personality traits and brand preference offer some useful insights for marketing managers.

## 2.9 Summary and Conclusions

This section has attempted to provide a brief summary of the literature relating to fashion brands and branding. It has established that fashion brands are symbolic devices, used by consumers to express something about themselves to others. Self-congruity studies suggest that consumers choose and use brands that reinforce their own self-concept and personality. This study seeks to explore whether similar relationships exist between characters in novels and the fashion brands associated with them in the story.

Given that there appears to be no previous research examining the relationship between novelistic characters and brands, and only limited empirical research related to the relationship between customer personality and fashion brand preference, this study will examine the relationship between character personality and fashion brand personality using the brand personality scales developed by Mulyanegara et al. (2009), which have been tested in a young fashion context and found to have some correlation with the big five personality dimensions.

The next chapter moves on to review the use of fashion brand names in novels.

# Chapter 3: The Use of Fashion Brand Names in Novels

## 3.1 Introduction

There are numerous studies of both representations of consumer behaviour and consumption in novels (e.g. Belk, 1986; Brown, 2005) and representations of fashion and clothing in fiction (e.g. Hughes, 2005; McNeil, Karaminas, & Cole, 2009; Plock, 2013; Chen, 2013); however, fashion brand name usage in novels has received limited attention.

This chapter explores existing academic research relating to the use of fashion brand names in novels. It begins by defining the novel and considering how consumption behaviour is represented in novels. It then presents a brief history of the use of brand names in novels, focussing on key authors and genres utilising fashion brand names. Finally, previous analyses of brands in novels are reviewed.

## 3.2 The Novel

Oxford Dictionaries (2014b) define 'a novel' as: "*A fictitious prose narrative of book length, typically representing character and action with some degree of realism*". The term 'novel' dates back to the mid-sixteenth century and is derived from the Italian 'novella' ('a tale, piece of news'). Today, the term 'novel' is applied to a wide variety of book-length narratives (Burgess, 2019), whose only common characteristic is that they are pieces of prose fiction (Cuddon, 1991).

Early forms of the novel can be found in ancient Egypt, classical Rome, tenth and eleventh century Japan and Elizabethan England (Burgess, 2019; Cuddon, 1991; Kuiper, 1995). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term 'novel' tended to denote a short story about characters and their actions in everyday life, usually set in the present, with the emphasis on things being 'new' or a 'novelty' (Cuddon, 1991). Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) is often credited as being the first true novel (Cascardi, 2008). However, the novel as we know it today did not become fully established as a literary genre until the eighteenth century.

There is some debate amongst scholars as to the identity of the first English novel. Watt (1957) argues that Daniel Defoe was the first author to break the 'protocol' of traditional storytelling. Prior to 1700, writers focused on retelling historical events or familiar stories. Defoe deviated from this approach of re-telling stories and began to develop original characters, writing novel-like works about a character and their life. Thus, many authors identify Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) as the first English novel (Canton et al., 2016; Watt, 1957); however, other authors credit Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, or *Virtue Rewarded*, (1740) as the first true example of the genre (Freeman, 1975). Despite the debate regarding the identity of the first novel, these early examples of the genre paved the way for many

more. Several factors helped to create the conditions for the genre to grow, including developments in printing, the presence of a literate middle-class and the appearance of London's first circulating library (Freeman, 1975).

As the genre developed during the eighteenth century, several key features emerged as components of the novel as a new literary form. The writers focused on the life of the present day as opposed to historical themes (Criscuolo, 2014); writers attempted to portray the varieties of human experience (Watt, 1957); characters and events were made to be believable, mirroring people and events in the everyday world. Characters within the stories were similar in social rank to the people reading the novels, thus readers were able to identify and empathise with them. Writers also began to pay more attention to self-consciousness and the process of thought (Criscuolo, 2014). The early novels were characterised by the attention that the writers paid to the physical environment, providing detailed descriptions of interiors, objects, possessions and clothing, enhancing the sense of realism (Watt, 1957). Thus, the novel became a literary form about people, things and experiences familiar to its readers (Criscuolo, 2014).

## 3.3 Representation of Commodity Culture and Consumerism in Novels

A number of authors have written about the development of commodity culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g. Lindner, 2003; Lynch, 1998; McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb, 1982; Richards, 1990). Commodity culture is defined as a culture organised around the production and exchange of material goods (Lindner, 2003). Its emergence owed much to the consumer and industrial revolutions, and the resulting growth in capitalism and the mass production of goods.

In *Capital (1867)*, Marx stated: *"The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities*" (Marx, 2013, p. 17). He observed that commodity fetishism led to "*the personification of objects and the representation of persons by things*" (Marx, 2013, p. 77). These views are echoed by Richards (1990, p. 1), who states "*In the short space of time between the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the First World War, the commodity became and has remained the one subject of mass culture, the centrepiece of everyday life, the focal point of all representation, the dead center of the modern world*".

As the early novelists wrote about things and experiences familiar to their readers, it is perhaps unsurprising that commodity culture began to be reflected in novels. The early novels emerged in the eighteenth century against a rapidly changing reality for the reader. The availability of new commodities, the establishment of new global trade routes, surging levels of imports, innovative retail practices, the rise of credit arrangements and new protocols for class relations and gender roles, all helped to create a dynamic and uncertain world. With the advent of the printing press and the

subscription library, both writing and reading became commercialised, fashionable activities (Lynch, 1998). Lynch argues that readers used novels to help accommodate themselves to newly commercialised social relations, suggesting that the novels offered readers an education in consumer capital. She cites examples of novels by Frances Burney and Jane Austen featuring scenes of shopping and fashionable consumption, suggesting that these novels taught women how to conduct themselves in shops (Lynch, 1998, p. 127).

Christoph Lindner (2003) considers how nineteenth & twentieth century fiction accommodated and responded to the rise of commodity culture and mass consumption. Using a small, strategically selected body of fiction to illustrate the rise and development of commodity culture, he argues that Victorian social novelists such as William Thackeray and Anthony Trollope produced narratives which dealt with the significance of the commodity and the material world through which it circulated. Their novels describe how people acquire commodities, use them and relate to them. In Lindner's view, these novelists reflect the power and influence of commodities on Victorian society. Each novelist "*conceives social exchange in terms of economic exchange*" constructing and deconstructing "*identity and its constituent parts in terms belonging to the marketplace*" (Lindner, 2003, p. 11).

Merish (1996) considers representations of female consumerism in naturalistic fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She argues that novels such as Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1883), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) and Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth* (1905), feature the female consumer as "*a new cultural type whose commodity desires often outstripped, and certainly redefined, her sexuality*" (Merish, 1996, p. 323). This representation of the female consumer can still be seen today in the sex n' shopping and chick lit genres.

Tischleder (2009) similarly compares the representations of commodity culture in *Sister Carrie* and *The House of Mirth*, arguing that the commodity is significant, not only as a principle of exchange characterising the commodification of social relations, but also as something which has a profound effect on the mental and affective state of individuals. Both Tischleder and Merish suggest that women in the novels are seen as commodities themselves, their value linked to their appearance. Tischleder illustrates this point with a quote from *The House of Mirth*, where the protagonist, Lilly Bart says:

> *"If I were shabby no one would have me: a woman is asked out as much for her clothes as for herself. The clothes are the background, the frame, if you like: they don't make success but they are a part of it. Who wants a dingy woman? We are expected to be pretty and well-dressed till we drop – and if we can't keep it up alone, we have to go into partnership."* (Wharton, 1905, pp. 17–18)

Tischleder (2009) suggests that the notion of dress as "deep surface" is a useful concept for understanding the troubled self-perception of Lilly Bart in a social environment increasingly defined

by commodity culture. Warwick & Cavallaro (1998) posit that, rather than being a superficial mode of signification, dress can be a manifestation of the unconscious at work through apparently superficial phenomena, thus expressing the underlying beliefs and character of the wearer (hence "deep surface").

Donaldson (2001) analyses the way in which possessions help to define the characters in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). The novel explores themes of decadence, idealism, social upheaval, and excess in 1920s America. Donaldson argues that Gatsby's ostentatious choices in clothing, houses, cars and parties identify him as one of the nouveau riche, lacking the social graces and sense of superiority inherent in the other two main characters, Tom Buchanan and Nick Carraway, who both come from 'old money'. Donaldson compares Gatsby to Buchanan's lower-middle class mistress, Myrtle Wilson, arguing that in an effort to transcend their social status through a show of possessions, both are undone by their lack of cultivation, leading them to buy the wrong things. Again, characters, particularly women, are seen as commodities – objects to be bought or sold – with their desirability depending largely on the way that they present themselves and the possessions that surround them.

Over the course of the twentieth century, commodity culture continued to develop, accelerating in the post-war decades, particularly the 1980s. Capitalist society moved away from a focus on industrial production and towards a focus on consumerism, with a corresponding shift from the production of commodities towards their cultural representation (through mass media & advertising) with the aim of creating customer demand (Lindner, 2003). Lindner uses Don DeLillo's postmodern novel *White Noise* (1985) to illustrate the way that the commodity in its mass mediated form has become the focal point of cultural representation. In this novel, people shop impulsively and compulsively against the backdrop of the 'white noise' of consumerism (marketing messages).

Stephen Brown (2011, p. 72) sums up the relationship between consumerism and contemporary literature thus: "*We live in a consumer society, a marketing saturated world, where luxury brands are the measure of man and unrelenting advertising messages are forced into every available orifice…Since creative writers capture evoke, illuminate and reimagine their surroundings, our consumer society is an obvious target for best-selling literary types".* He cites a range of contemporary novelists, including Sophie Kinsella, Jackie Collins and Candace Bushnell, as examples of those who raise issues relating to commodity culture and the consumer society in their work.

## 3.4 The Use of Fashion Brand Names in Novels

The use of "real" places, people or events to create verisimilitude in works of fiction is a long-established literary technique (de Botton, 1996). As Brown (2011) observes, we live in a consumer

society, surrounded by brands, and accordingly commercial brand names are frequently used in novels, where they help to make characters appear more realistic, enabling the reader to identify with them (Hoeller, 1994). Bloom (2002, p. 21) suggests that contemporary popular fiction engenders "*a form of lifestyle, foregrounding objects and events rather than psychological characterisation. As such, characters become symbiotically associated with the things they own, which then act as substitutes for inner characterisation.*" This lifestyle-based approach to fiction relies heavily on the use of brand names.

Clothing is a symbolic and value-expressive product category, and therefore individuals will often make assumptions about others purely on the basis of what they are wearing (Banister & Hogg, 2001). Thus, fashion brand names are commonly used in contemporary fiction. The reader who is familiar with the brands in question can identify not only the appearance of the character and their clothing, but also their socio-economic standing, age group, lifestyle and personality by association with the brands (Karrh, 1998).

## 3.5 The History of Brand Usage in Novels

The use of brand names in novels is often assumed to be a relatively recent phenomenon, confined to lowbrow, popular fiction; however, examples of the use of brand names in fiction can be found throughout a wide variety of novels and literary genres over the past 200 years.

In an early example of the phenomenon, Salmon (2020) recounts a review of Catherine Gore's silver fork novel *Pin-Money (1831)*, published in Fraser's Magazine. The review criticises the novel because:

> *"Almost in every page of the novel, we see the names of one or two fashionable shopkeepers stuck in."* (Maginn, 1831, p. 14)

The review goes on to list some of the references to shops and branded commodities used by her characters, suggesting that the use of these brand names might entice readers to:

> *"spend their pin money in these extravagant depositories, and ruin themselves and their husbands…"* (Maginn, 1831, p. 14)

The reviewer suggests that the use of brand names in the novel may be an advertising strategy orchestrated by Gore's publishers to increase sales by encouraging the named businesses to buy a copy of the novel (Maginn, 1831; Salmon, 2020). Although there may be a question as to whether brand names were being used for commercial purposes or as a literary device, they continued to appear in novels throughout the nineteenth century.

By the mid-1800s, the novel had become firmly established as the predominant form of literature. Reading had become a popular pastime for people from a wide range of backgrounds and readers

increasingly sought stories that were relevant to their own lives and the world that they lived in (Canton et al., 2016). Against this background, realism became a literary trend, originating in France, with authors such as Balzac and Flaubert (Cuddon, 1991). Realist writers sought to depict familiar scenes and characters as accurately as possible (Canton et al., 2016). Realists believed that an author should be concerned with everyday events, with their own environment and the political and social movements of their day, telling a story truthfully, without dramatising or romanticising it (Cuddon, 1991). Graydon (2008) identifies some late nineteenth Century American realist novels including William Dean Howells's *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), which make specific references to named brands. He suggests that this use of brands in late 19th Century novels mirrors the emergence of branding as a business practice and the peaking of literary realism, arguing that novels from the period helped to explain branding to literary audiences.

The naturalism movement in literature (c.1870-1920) developed out of realism (Cuddon, 1991). It aimed to be more explanatory than realism by exploring the underlying causes for a person's actions and beliefs. Influenced by Darwin's biological theories and Comte's application of scientific theories to the study of society, naturalist novels focused on the social environment, particularly its deficiencies and the shortcomings of human beings (Cuddon, 1991). Naturalist novels suggest that family, social conditions and the environment determine human character and fate; authors frequently adopt a detached, objective position and novels often have a sombre and pessimistic tone (Zhang, 2010). Émile Zola, Edith Wharton, and Jack London are examples of some key authors in this genre (Rahn, 2011b). Wharton is particularly notable. She came from a wealthy background and her work focused on the upper levels of society; her novels show the unforgiving nature of the class structure at that time. One of Wharton's early novels, *The House of Mirth* (1905), tells the story of Lily Bart, a woman who is torn between her desire for money and luxurious living, and her desire for a relationship based on love. In keeping with its high society setting, the novel mentions fashion brands of the day, including *Doucet* and *Paquin*.

Modernism is a broad literary movement which has its roots in the late nineteenth century and which continued to have a wide influence internationally throughout much of the twentieth century, however there are certain places and periods where modernistic tendencies were most active in literature; these include France from the 1890s until the 1940s, England from around 1910 through to the 1930s, and in the USA from shortly before the First World War through to the end of the inter-war period (Cuddon, 1991). Modernism broke away from established literary rules and conventions and was more experimental than previous movements in terms of form and style, being particularly concerned with the use of language and the practice of writing itself (Cuddon, 1991). It was influenced by a series of culture shocks, starting with World War I, followed by the economic boom of the 1920s,

the great depression of the 1930s and then World War II (Canton et al., 2016). Writers in the modernist period struggled to find meaning in all of this chaos. Alongside these major cultural shocks, the 20th Century witnessed changes in the role of women in society and the acceptance of different cultural groups, resulting in a broader range of literary voices. Notable writers of this period include Marcel Proust, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf.

One of the central preoccupations of modernist literature is with the inner self and self-consciousness. Modernism introduced the 'unreliable' narrator, and some modernists wrote from a new perspective, writing in a 'stream of consciousness'. Their writing explored the inner workings of the human mind, reflecting the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, which were coming into mainstream acceptance at the time (Rahn, 2011a).

A number of modernist writers use brand names in their work. For example, Proust mentions *Fortuny* gowns several times in his seven-volume novel *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913–1927). In Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915), one of the characters is described as wearing "her hair like a *Liberty* shopgirl's" (Woolf, 1915); and the narrator of Anita Loos' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925), Lorelei Lee, decides that "*Paris is devine*" when she sees "*famous historical names, like Coty and Cartier*" (Loos, 1925, p. 52).

Following the Second World War, a new generation of writers emerged. Experiences of World War II, Cold War uncertainties, the ever-present nuclear threat and the emergence of an anti-establishment youth culture in the USA, led to an unsettled atmosphere which inspired new postmodern writing techniques (Canton et al., 2016). Postmodern works are often seen as a response against the modernist movement in literature, but postmodernism is not really a single literary movement. Several post-war developments in literature have similarities, and these developments are sometimes grouped together and labelled "postmodern" (Cuddon, 1991).

Howe (1959) was one of the first to use the term 'postmodern' in the context of literary fiction. In "Mass Society and Postmodern Fiction" he discusses the problems faced by post-war American novelists adapting to a society in which traditional associations were breaking down and "*in which man becomes a consumer, himself mass-produced like the products, diversions and values that he absorbs."* (Howe, 1959, p. 426). Howe suggested that the post-war novelist, in contrast to those writing in the pre-war years, lacked a stable, known background against which characters could be shaped. Instead characters lack social definition and the focus of the novelist shifts to the individual and their search for identity (Bertens, 1986; Howe, 1959; Leer, 1962). For Howe, writing in 1959, postmodernism was essentially a phenomenon of the American 1950s (Bertens, 1986) and in his essay

he mentions a number of authors whose work may no longer be considered postmodern by critics today (Hoberek, 2007), these include the "beatnik" (or Beat Generation) writers of San Francisco.

Today the Beat Generation writers are more commonly identified as pre-postmodernists, positioned somewhere between modernism and post-modernism (Izgarjan, 1997; R.C. Johnson, 2000). Dissatisfied with consumer culture, they were interested in environmentalism and eastern philosophies. Their writing was bold, straightforward and expressive, subverting the formalism of the modernist movement. Key authors in this genre included Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs (Rahn, 2011c). However, despite their dissatisfaction with the materialism and consumer culture of the 1950s, their work still uses brand names; for example Kerouac's *On the Road* (1955) describes one of the protagonists as wearing *"a Levi outfit, jacket and all"* (Kerouac, 1957, p. 242). Even though the use of the Levi's name may not have been intended to promote the brand, fellow Beat Generation writer, William Burroughs has been quoted as saying *"After 1957 On the Road sold a trillion Levi's, a million espresso coffee machines, and also sent countless kids on the road…"* (Burroughs, n.d. in O'Hagan, 2007).

Whilst some of the earliest examples of postmodern fiction can be found in the 1950s (for example Burrough's *Naked Lunch* (1959)), the movement is more often associated with books of the 1960s and 1970s but is best identified in terms of its characteristics and style, rather than the time period in which it was written. Postmodern fiction tends to be non-traditional or experimental in approach. It often employs irony, playfulness and black humour but is typically characterised by reliance on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, metafiction, maximalism, minimalism, temporal distortion, parody, pastiche, hyper-reality and intertextuality. Other discernible features include an eclectic approach, aleatory writing and the incorporation of different genres within a single work (Cuddon, 1991; Hossain & Karim, 2013).

Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971) is an example of a postmodern novel. The book is presented as part autobiography and part fiction as the protagonist/author and his attorney set out on a drug-fuelled search for the American Dream in Las Vegas. A frequently quoted passage from the novel includes mentions of both a branded motorcycle (the *BSA 650 Lightning*) and shorts from the clothing retailer *L.L. Bean*:

> *"My central memory of that time seems to hang on one or five or maybe forty nights—or very early mornings—when I left the Filmore half-crazy and, instead of going home, aimed the big 650 Lightning across the Bay Bridge at a hundred miles an hour wearing L.L. Bean shorts and a Butte sheepherder's jacket…*" (H. S. Thompson, 1971, p. 67)

Postmodernism peaked in the 1960s and 1970s and was side-lined in the 1980s with a new surge of realism, inspired by authors such as Tom Wolfe and Raymond Carver. Wolfe, a former journalist, published an essay entitled "Stalking the billion-footed beast" in the November 1989 issue of *Harper's* magazine. In this essay, he bemoaned the "absurdist", "neo-fabulist" and "minimalist" postmodernist influences on American novels since the 1960s, and called for a return to realism, with novels that reflected contemporary issues and contemporary society. However, Hoeller (1994) argues that the heavy use of brands and designer labels in Wolfe's own novel, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987), even if used to create a sense of realism, leads the novel to participation in the postmodern sensibility. She states:

> *"…designer names do not just fill in the blanks or are not just the result of the observations of a 'new journalist' or realist. They become a form of telling rather than showing; they replace adjectives, manners, even dialogue."* (Hoeller, 1994, p. 4)

The 1960s and early 1970s era of female sexual emancipation also heralded a new genre of writing by women, epitomised by Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls* (1966) and Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973). These early writers paved the way for the "sex and shopping novel", best exemplified by the best-selling works of 1970s and 1980s authors such as Judith Krantz, Jackie Collins, Danielle Steel, Shirley Conran and Julie Burchill (McCracken & Roth, 1989; Brown, 1995; Bloom, 2002). The sex and shopping genre dominated popular fiction in the 1980s. Sceats & Cunningham (1996) equate it to a female version of the male fortune novels, such as those by Jeffrey Archer, but as the name of the genre implies, the business of the heroines of these novels is not to produce, but to consume commodities, and enjoy (or endure) sexual intercourse. They argue that the heroines' travel, work and achievement in the novels is simply consumption on a wider scale; thus, whilst men in fortune novels "*make money, achieve ambitions, plan, plot, scheme and triumph. Heroines consume and are consumed*." (Sceats & Cunningham, 1996, p. 143).

The following passage from Julie Burchill's *Ambition* (1989) illustrates the heavy use of fashion brand names in this genre:

> *"On Madison Avenue, at the soft-tech, Italo-Japanese, black-beige Armani shop, she bought black label, and at Krizia she bought sportswear that would have had a nervous breakdown if one did anything more rigorous than hail a cab in it. She avoided Walter Steiger but did succumb to a pair of pewter, lace and plastic Vittoria Riccis for Zero. She snapped up a brace of six-hundred-dollar sweaters at Sonia Rykiel and half a dozen pairs of cashmere tights at $178 a throw at Fogal."* (Burchill, 1990, p. 252)

Bloom (2002, p. 217) argues that there is value in the shopping element of the genre, because the "*characters move in a designer milieu; the brand names, the shop names and the locations are important to establish that the characters move in circles which are themselves the stuff of fantasy...*" He argues that this type of fantasy is equivalent to the thrills in an adventure story:

> *"The traditional woman's role of shopper, selector of the products to be consumed by the rest of the family, burdened with this never-ending chore – this task is transformed in a Krantz novel into the ultimate consumer delight, where unlimited wealth offers unlimited opportunity to select indulgences in opulence and splendor."* (Bloom, 2002, p. 217)

The mid 1980s saw the development of a new postmodern literary movement: Blank Fiction. A diverse group of New York based authors including Tama Janowitz, Jay McInerney and Bret Easton Ellis, wrote books dealing with contemporary urban life, featuring drugs, crime, sexual excess, consumerism, inner city decay and fashion-crazed nightlife, using flat affectless prose (Young & Caveney, 1994). Blank Fiction is replete with references to the products, personalities and places that characterise late twentieth century American life. The novels make constant allusions to retail outlets and brand names. Annesley (1998) argues that it is the commercial features of the environment that provide these novels with their reference points. Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991) is particularly noteworthy for its use of fashion brands. For example, in the first chapter of the novel Patrick Bateman and his friend Timothy Price, leave work and go to dinner at the house of Patrick's girlfriend:

> *"...he turns around and straightens his Versace tie ready to face whoever. Courtney opens the door and she's wearing a Krizia cream silk blouse, a Krizia rust tweed skirt and silk-satin de'Orsay pumps from Manolo Blahnik..."* (Easton-Ellis, 1991, p. 8)

Mullan (2006, p. 207) suggests that *American Psycho* represents product placement "*with satirical excess...There is a kind of absurd poetry to it*".

Chick lit is a genre of fiction that became popular in the mid to late 1990s. Chick lit takes a humorous approach to the day-to-day lives of young women, and often heavily features issues of consumerism. The genre has its roots in both popular romance and comedy, but is characterised by stories featuring young women, with jobs in the media, suffering from relationship problems, steeped in consumer culture and seeking fulfilment (consumer and/or romantic gratification) (Knowles, 2004a). Some of the earliest examples of chick lit include Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City* (1997). Since the introduction of chick lit, the genre has grown significantly, spawning a number of sub-genres.

P. Butler & Desai (2008 p10) suggest that, in chick lit, "*consumption is often reduced to commodity consumption, especially of name-brand designer items, which functions as a significant marker of the characters' choice and cosmopolitan social capital*". Certainly, designer labels and fashion brands are frequently used in chick lit novels; as Dorney (2004 p14) notes: "*We know Bridget [Jones] buys her clothes in Jigsaw, shoes in Pied a Terre, and her food, chardonnay and cigarettes in Cullens*".

The mid to late 1990s also saw the emergence of Lad Lit (Gormley, 2009), a genre exemplified by authors such as Nick Hornby and David Nicholls. Lad lit books are written by men and typically focus on young, male characters. In common with chick lit, there is usually an element of humour in the writing. Dorney (2004) argues that lad lit is a type of recognition fiction, describing a football and music-obsessed lifestyle shared by its readers. However, her content analysis of Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1995) suggests that brands have little place in the genre:

> *"Brands have no place in High Fidelity, even the hardware goes un-namechecked…. Whereas in the chicklit examples, everything is specific, in High Fidelity everything is generic, and indefinite: […] even Rob's beer is nameless. His descriptions are not without image consciousness, but they lack the product placement so beloved of our chicklit models…"* (Dorney, 2004, p. 17)

Whehelan (2009) notes that chick lit has now migrated into teen fiction. One of the results of this migration is the increased use of brand names in novels aimed at children and teens. The following excerpt from *American Beauty: an A-List Novel* (2006) by Zoey Dean, illustrates the extent of brand referencing in the novel, which features the lives of 14-18-year-old American high school girls:

> *"It hadn't taken long to pick her outfit from her cedar-lined walk-in closet: Seven For All Mankind jeans with a special-order Ferrari red leather low-slung belt encrusted with diamonds, and an Ella Moss kimono tee in hot pink held together by only a tiny clasp just below her cleavage so that it blew about her on the yacht […] Her shoes were silvery white Jimmy Choo snakeskin pumps."* (Dean, 2006, pp. 24–25)

This heavy use of fashion brand names is not just associated with teenage fiction about girls, Bullen (2009) discusses the use of brand names in J. Minter's *The Insiders* (2004). This young adult novel follows the lives of a group of privileged Manhattan teenaged boys. In common with the A-List series, the book is full of designer brand names, including "*Tom Ford for Yves St Laurent; JM Weston; Prada; Miu Miu; and Crocket and Jones – and these are just the brands of men's shoes*." (Bullen, 2009, p. 501)

Thus, the use of (fashion) brand names in novels is an established literary technique, appearing across a wide range of genres throughout the 20th century. However, the technique forms a key characteristic of certain contemporary fictional genres, notably the sex and shopping novel, blank fiction and chick lit and its derivatives.

## 3.6 Why and How Do Different Authors Use Brand Names?

Whilst brand referencing is widely used in novels, the reasons why, and ways in which, the brands are used appear to vary from author to author. Friedman (1991) singled out two authors as frequent users of brand names: Ian Fleming and Stephen King. He argued that these authors have used brand names systematically and consistently to create distinctive styles of writing.

Ian Fleming is author of the James Bond novels, producing 12 novels between 1955 to 1965 (Friedman, 1991). In these novels, Fleming details Bond's lifestyle in minute detail; for example, in *From Russia with Love* (1957, ch.11), we are told that breakfast is Bond's favourite meal of the day:

> *"It consisted of very strong coffee, from De Bry in New Oxford Street, brewed in an American Chemex, of which he drank two large cups, black and without sugar […]*
>
> *…Then there were two thick slices of wholewheat toast, a large pat of deep yellow Jersey butter and three squat glass jars containing Tiptree 'Little Scarlet' strawberry jam, Cooper's Vintage Oxford marmalade and Norwegian Heather Honey from Fortnum's."* (Fleming, 1957, p. 134)

Mullan (2006, p. 206) suggests that Bond's choice of brands assert his tastes: "*he is an exacting man, unswayed by fashion*". He argues that Bond's brands assure the reader of his decisiveness and knowledge. "*Once Bond has discovered what is best, he never veers.*"(Mullan, 2006, p. 206). However, Ritson (2008) argues that Bond is not brand loyal: "*Like all connoisseurs, he varies his brand of choice depending on the mood, the company and the occasion*", citing Bond's champagne preferences for Bollinger, Dom Perignon, Veuve Cliquot, Pol Roger and Taittinger as examples. As Bond travels, his brands also vary, signifying his cosmopolitan choosiness (Mullan, 2006).

Interestingly, Fleming does not mention any brand names in connection with Bond's wardrobe. Although Savile Row is hinted at, it is never explicitly identified as the source of Bond's suits. The books give only brief descriptions of Bond's clothing – the colours, materials and styles, but never the brand name. However, Bond's taste and refinement in clothing is communicated through the attention that he pays to the dress of others, noticing and recognising the clothing and accessories of his adversaries. For example, in Moonraker, Hugo Drax's cuff-links are identified as Cartier and his watch as a Patek Phillipe (Absolutely James Bond, 2003).

Amis (1965, p. 91) argues that Fleming uses brand names to provide a linkage to reality, which is important when the plot is unrealistic. He suggests that the brands appeal to the reader's own experience, act as shorthand in sketching character and encourage the reader's sense of participation. However Mullan (2006, p. 207) contradicts this, arguing that the brands used in the Bond books would be far from familiar to Fleming's readers:

> *"Now we are habituated to novelists' use of brand labels, often lazily, to persuade us of the credibility of a character, or a way of life. Some of it bolsters what I have heard called "recognition fiction": novels whose credibility requires the readers to recognise a lifestyle that they share. Brands are key signifiers here. But Bond's brands are different. They constitute a language that would scarcely have been more foreign to Fleming's first readers than it is now. They are calculated to intrigue a British audience that, in 1957 when From Russia with Love was first published, had only recently struggled out of postwar austerity."* (Mullan, 2006, p. 207)

Fleming clearly recognised that many of the brands that he mentioned were out of the reach of ordinary people. For example, in *Casino Royale* (1953), M, the head of the British Secret Service, assigns Vesper Lynd, personal assistant to the Head of Section S (Soviet Union), to work with Bond. When Bond and Vesper meet for dinner in the casino, her outfit is described in detail:

> *"Her dress was of black velvet, simple and yet with the touch of splendour that only half a dozen couturiers in the world can achieve. There was a thin necklace of diamonds at her throat and a diamond clip in the low vee which just exposed the jutting swell of her breasts."* (Fleming, 1953, p. 52)

However, Vesper subsequently explains away her expensive clothing:

> *"I've got a friend who is a "vendeuse" with Dior and somehow she managed to borrow me this and the frock I was wearing this morning, otherwise I couldn't possibly have competed with all these people."* (Fleming, 1953, p. 58)

So, her Dior dress and diamonds are only on loan; Fleming recognises that they are not something that a personal assistant working for a government department could afford to buy for herself; she needs to borrow them to fit in with the affluent patrons of the casino. The brands in the James Bond books are generally aspirational brands – they describe a fantasy lifestyle.

Horror author Stephen King is also identified as being a frequent user of brand names in his novels, which has earned him condemnation from critics (Friedman, 1991). When defending his use of brand names in an interview, King was quoted as saying:

> *"Sometimes the brand name is the perfect word, and it will crystallize a scene for me. When Jack Torrance is pumping down that Excedrin in* The Shining*, you know just what that is. I always want to ask these critics—some are novelists, some of them college literature professors—What the fuck do you do? Open your medicine cabinet and see empty gray bottles? Do you see generic shampoo, generic aspirin? When you go to the store and you get a six-pack, does it just say beer? When you go down and you open your garage door, what's parked in there? A car? Just a car?*
>
> *And then I say to myself, I bet they do. [...] and that's a failure of observation. And I think one of the things that I'm supposed to do is to say, it's a* Pepsi*, OK? It's not a soda. It's a Pepsi. It's a specific thing. Say what you mean. Say what you see. Make a photograph, if you can, for the reader."* (King quoted in Lehmann-Haupt & Rich, 2006)

Friedman (1991) contrasts King's use of brand names with that of Fleming. He suggests that what is particularly noteworthy about the brands that King uses is that they are brands used by normal, everyday people in their day-to-day existence. So, whilst Bond is drinking Bollinger, eating honey from Fortnum's and driving an Aston Martin, King's characters are drinking Pepsi, eating a Big Mac and driving a Ford pick-up truck. Friedman suggests that this use of everyday brands is part of the horror writer's need to establish a norm and then disrupt it to shock the reader. Thus, King inundates readers with the familiar commercial names of their own households to establish the normality of the setting and the characters.

Hoeller (1994) compares the use of brand names in two different novels published in the 1980s, Danielle Steel's *Crossings* (1982) and Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987). She finds that both novels make extensive use of designer and brand names committing "*both writers to a world of signs – a post-modern world in which important premises of both literary traditions need to be revised or even abandoned*". Hoeller finds that Steel uses brand names for verisimilitude – she requires everything to be authentic in order to create the scene for her reader; whilst Wolfe uses brands in a realist, journalistic, fashion; designer names function to define social boundaries and to highlight characters' preoccupation with their own appearance.

Hoeller quotes an article which describes the way in which Steel incorporates brand names into her work. Apparently, Steel begins her novels with a chapter-by-chapter synopsis, which includes a description of the characters, setting and plot. This is then sent to Steel's research assistant to 'fill in the blanks' in order to create a historically accurate setting. Thus, it is her assistant who selects which designer names appear in the final novel – the brand names are researched just as any other information, in order to ensure verisimilitude (Everett, 1992). In contrast, Hoeller argues that Wolfe uses brand names as signs to mark characters, and that the characters are involved in their own design – they see themselves as other see them, using brands to help communicate their preoccupation with themselves and their social status (Hoeller, 1994). Wolfe is particularly detailed in his description of the clothing that his characters wear. As Conroy (1987, p. 1) notes:

> *"As new characters enter the narrative we are immediately told, at length and in elaborate detail, what they are wearing, as if the key to an understanding of their souls might emerge from that information."*

Wolfe himself states: "*Clothing is a wonderful doorway that most easily leads you to the heart of an individual; it's the way they reveal themselves*" (Woolfe in Angelo, 1990). However, Hoeller argues that the clothing described in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, actually reveals very little about the heart of Wolfe's characters. The preoccupation with brand names means that the characters are merely 'surfaces' whose only characteristic is their interest in designing themselves (Hoeller, 1994).

Arvidsson (2007) argues that Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), was the first literary text where brand names played a prominent part. The novel depicts the 1980s, a period of lifestyle branding and multiple brand extensions. The clothing worn by characters in the novel is described in minute detail, and always associated with brands, for example:

> *"Evelyn's wearing a cotton blouse by Dolce & Gabbana, suede shoes by Yves Saint Laurent, a stencilled calf skirt by Adrienne Landau with a suede belt by Jill Stuart, Calvin Klein tights, Venetian glass earrings by Frances Patiky Stein […] Caruthers is wearing a lamb's wool sport coat, a cashmere/vicuña cardigan sweater, cavalry twill trousers, a cotton shirt and a silk tie, all from Hermès. ('How tacky', Evelyn whispered to me; I silently agreed.)"* (Easton-Ellis, 1991, p. 137)

The characters in the novel are constructed using branded items, and the choice of brand is often what defines a person or initiates a social situation. Throughout the novel, characters remain distant and anonymous, while their brands speak for them (Arvidsson, 2006). Young & Caveney (1994) echo this, arguing that Ellis's use of brand names and detailed dress descriptions serves to obliterate rather than define character:

> *"By adorning his characters as if they were Barbie dolls, in more or less interchangeable haute couture, and, moreover, by duplicating the self-important intonations of the fashion magazine as he does so, he ably deconstructs much of what we mean by 'character' in fiction and forces on us an awareness of the surreal character of consumer-speak"* (Young & Caveney, 1994, p. 102)

Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic* series of novels represent a particular exaggeration of the use of brand names in chick lit, as this passage from *Mini Shopaholic* (2010) illustrates:

> *"Minnie definitely scores top marks for her outfit. (Dress: one-off Danny Kovitz; coat: Rachel Riley; shoes: Baby Dior.) And I've got her safely strapped into her toddler reins (Bill Amberg leather, really cool, they were in Vogue)."* (Kinsella, 2010, p. 9)

Not all of the brands utilised in the Shopaholic books are real (e.g. Danny Kovitz is a fictional designer brand, Kovitz being a friend of the protagonist, Becky Bloomwood, in the novels), therefore verisimilitude is not the primary aim of the brand mentions in the series. Becky constantly itemises her purchases, so the brand references appear to become a series of shopping lists, rather than a way to support characterisation. Dorney (2004) argues that there is very little depth associated with the brand referencing in Kinsella's novels – the brands function solely as a means of demonstrating Becky's shopping addiction, rather than conveying anything about her tastes.

## 3.7 Previous Analyses of the Usage of Brand Names in Novels

Despite the prevalence of brands in fiction, existing academic research on brand name usage in novels is limited. Some of the first research in this area was undertaken by Monroe Friedman in the 1980s.

Friedman undertook a series of studies investigating the influence of consumerism on the language used in the US during the post-war era. He conducted detailed content analyses of a range of popular literature sources, in order to examine language trends, using brand names as an indicator of linguistic influence (Friedman 1991).

In his first study Friedman analysed 31 best-selling American novels, set in the US, published between 1946 and 1975. He developed two measures for presenting the content analysis: brand name frequency (number of brand name mentions per 10,000 words) and brand name variety (number of different brand names mentioned per 10,000 words). Across the sample, he found, on average 5.39 brand name mentions per 10,000 words. 507 different brand names were mentioned within the 31 novels, with each name appearing, on average 3.12 times. Automobile brands were the most frequently used, accounting for 24.1% of the brand name mentions; followed by magazines (11.7%), sweets, snacks and soft drinks (6.7%), alcoholic drinks (6.6%), toiletries (6.0%), retail store chains (5.1%) and apparel (5.0%). Freidman notes that many of the most frequently mentioned product categories are high on the subjective dimension of value-expressiveness. Value-expressive products are those that help individuals express their values and self-concepts. He also notes that the stereotype held of the individual who prefers, uses or owns the particular product, is of particular significance, as items of conspicuous consumption are seen as possessing considerable potential for facilitating symbolic communication – a factor which may account for their relatively high usage by novelists. Fashion-related brands appearing in the novels included *Vogue* Magazine, *Levi's* Jeans, *Saks Fifth Avenue* Store and *Tiffany* Jewellers.

Friedman next focused on the changes in brand name usage over the 28-year period of his study. He found statistically significant correlations between year of publication and both measures (brand name frequency and brand name variety). In terms of brand name frequency, the early 1970s generated a mean value of 13.05 that was 659% higher than the value of 1.72 found in the late 1940s. Similarly, in terms of brand name variety the early 1970s achieved a mean value of 7.09, which was 575% higher than the value of 1.05 found in the late 1940s. He also found that the sharpest increase in each measure occurred between the 1960s and early 1970s, approximating an exponential growth curve.

Friedman followed this study with a qualitative analysis of the linguistic forms of brand name usage in popular culture writing. He found that when brand names appeared, they were typically in the original trademarked form as intended by their advertisers, and their use seemed to be limited to identifying a particular product or service. However, he also noted three variations of linguistic form: (i) abbreviations (e.g. *Cosmo* instead of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*); (ii) allusions to advertising messages,

such as jingles, slogans or brand characters; and (iii) neologisms, which he defines as turning brand names into adjective or verb forms for literary effect (e.g. "a *Betty Crocker* mom" or "*Windexing* windows"). He also found examples of brand names being used as metaphors or similes for physical appearance, human emotions, cultural values, lifestyles and social relations (Friedman, 1991).

Concerned about the impact of what he called 'word-of-author advertising' on the consumer, Friedman (1987, 1991) undertook a further study to examine the quality of the products associated with frequently mentioned brand names, arguing that, if the brand names were associated with high quality products, there would be less cause for consumer concern about the practice. He used data from *Consumer Report* tests to determine the quality of the products associated with the frequently used brands identified in his previous surveys. He concluded that unsponsored word-of-author advertising did not appear to constitute a counterproductive source of consumer influence, as most brands represented in popular literature were associated with relatively high-quality products; however, he warned that consumers should be alerted to the possibility of commercial influences in popular media, as there were some cases where lower quality products were featured.

Brown (1995) made reference to Friedman's studies of brand names in his analysis of two 'Sex and Shopping' novels by Judith Krantz: *Scruples* (1978) and *Scruples Two* (1992). Brown found a total of 862 product and service brand names mentioned across the two novels; however, a comparative analysis with Friedman's findings revealed that the frequency of brand name occurrence in certain product categories differed considerably relative to Friedman's sample. Some branded product categories did not appear at all (e.g. gasoline, building materials); and others, such as cars, sweets, alcoholic drinks and toiletries were rarely mentioned*;* however, there were numerous mentions of upmarket retail stores, designer fashion brands, glossy magazines and expensive leisure services (e.g. hotels, restaurants and nightclubs). Using Friedman's measures of brand frequency and brand variety, the comparative content analysis found that the frequency of cited brands in the *Scruples* novels was 24.98 per 10,000 words of text, compared to an average of 5.39 per 10,000 words in Friedman's investigation. A total of 362 different brands are mentioned in the *Scruples* novels (an average of 10.49 per 10,000 words of text) compared to 507 different brands in all 31 works in Friedman's sample (an average of 3.12 per 10,000 words). However, Brown noted that there are novels in Friedman's sample which exhibit a higher incidence of brand name usage than the *Scruples* novels, suggesting that the extent of commercialisation in the "Sex n' Shopping" genre does not appear to be significantly greater than that of other contemporary fictional genres.

In Brown's analysis of the *Scruples* novels, one of his most interesting findings was that there was a significant reduction in brand name usage between *Scruples* (1978) and *Scruples Two* (1992). The

brand frequency measure for *Scruples* was 33.64 per 10,000 words, with an average of 16.30 different brands mentioned per 10,000 words. However, for *Scruples Two*, the brand frequency measure fell to 16.28 and the brand variety measure fell to 7.50. Brown found that the pattern of product categories was similar in both cases, but that the frequency of brand name mentions fell in every product category from *Scruples* to *Scruples Two*. Thus, Friedman's hypothesis of an exponentially increasing use of brand names in popular fiction did not appear to hold. Brown also found that although the hyper-affluent setting was the same in both novels, the sequel mentioned numerous less-exclusive brand names and stores. He suggested that the differences between the two books reflected the changed socio-economic climate between the late 1970s, which anticipated the affluent, 'greed-is-good', culture of the 1980s, and the more pessimistic, low growth, economic austerity and anti-consumption ethos of the early 1990s.

Brown (1995a) also compared *Scruples* and *American Psycho* in a study focussing on what he termed 'the dark side' of consumption behaviour, namely representations of negative behaviours such as shoplifting, compulsive consumption, obsessive collecting and other dysfunctional activities. Once again, Brown conducted a summative content analysis of the two novels. Using a broad interpretation of the definition of a 'brand', to include tradenames, celebrities, works of art, professional associations, educational institutions and almost any real reference used by the author, Brown found that, together, the two novels cite 1393 different brand names on 3402 occasions, an average of 2.44 mentions per brand. He found that both books cite similar categories of brands, with retail stores, brand name apparel, restaurants, hotels and nightclubs accounting for 62.6% of the total brand name mentions and 63.9% of the different brand name citations. However, he found that the two novels exhibit some significant differences in their use of brand names, in particular the volume of brand name citations in each novel. Although *American Pyscho* is approximately 33% shorter than *Scruples*, both the total number of cited brands and the frequency with which each is mentioned is almost double that of *Scruples* (S. Brown, 1995b).

Using Friedman's more restrictive definition of a 'brand' (restricted to product tradenames), Brown compared the two novels with those in Friedman's survey. Using Friedman's classification system, *Scruples* mentions 282 different brand names, with 528 brand name citations in total, which works out at 16.3 and 33.6 per 10,000 words of text respectively. This is higher than most, but not all, of the novels in Friedman's sample. However, Brown found that *American Psycho* averages 52.8 different brand names per 10,000 words of text and 142.9 total brands per 10,000 words. This is more than three times higher than any of the books in Friedman's sample, suggesting that Friedman's hypothesis of an exponential growth in the use of brand names in novels might be correct (S. Brown, 1995b). However, Brown refers to a newspaper article by Billen (1993), which argues that the excessive

number of brand name mentions in *American Psycho* was responsible for ending the growth of this narrative technique, stating that brand name mentions in novels significantly declined following the publication of *American Psycho* (Billen, 1993; S. Brown, 1995b).

Brown also found some differences in the types of brand names mentioned in the two novels, with *Scruples* placing more emphasis on celebrities, retail stores, magazines, newspapers and educational institutions; whilst *American Psycho* contains more mentions of menswear, household goods, food, drink, tobacco and speciality merchandise. Brown suggests that the differences may be attributable to the different settings and plots of the novels (Los Angeles fashion retailing versus New York financial services); but they also reflect traditional gender-related preoccupations (shopping, male film stars and glossy lifestyle magazines for the female-focused romance novel *Scruples*, and hi-fi equipment, rock bands and alcoholic drinks for the male-focused postmodern murder novel *American Psycho*) (S. Brown, 1995b).

Dorney (2004) examined the use of brand names in chick lit and lad lit by comparing India Knight's *My Life on A Plate* (2000), Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad* (2001), Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) and Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1995). She argues that whilst brand names flesh out the character in *Bridget Jones's Diary,* they are simply the means by which readers make sense of the character in the later chick lit examples (*My Life on a Plate* and *Shopaholic Abroad)*. She supports this assertion by comparing the width and depth of brand referencing in *Bridget Jones's Diary* with that of the two later books, using a summative content analysis. However, she includes both fictional and real-life brand names in her content analysis and, certainly in the case of *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Shopaholic Abroad* numerous brand references have been missed or miscounted, so the data cannot be considered as reliable.

Other researchers have considered some of the more controversial aspects of brand name use in novels. For example, Bullen (2009) and N.R. Johnson (2008, 2010) both examined consumption and brand name use in young adult fiction, an issue about which many commentators have expressed concern. Bullen (2009) focused her qualitative analysis on J. Minter's novel *The Insiders* (2004) and concluded that the semiotics of the brands mentioned in the novel take on the narrative capacity to tell stories about the characters. She argues that the use of brand names in a novel contributes to the realism of the story, supports characterisation and establishes realms of shared experience between the characters and the reader, and through this it normalises characters' consumer identities and practices.

Similarly, N.R. Johnson (2008, 2010) examined the use of brand names in three bestselling US young adult romance series: Gossip Girl, A-List, and The Clique. Taking a feminist perspective and using

interpretive analysis of texts, she found that consumption of designer brands and products was linked to female characters' romantic and sexual desirability. A quantitative analysis of six books from the three series highlighted the frequent use of clothing and cosmetic brands. N.R. Johnson found 572 unique brand names mentioned in the books examined, with clothing and accessories, beauty products, and related retail operations comprising 48% of these product names. Furthermore, these fashion-related brand names were referenced 839 times, or about once every two pages on average. She concluded that "*Whether or not the brands within these novels represent product placement, they read like an advertisement. Branding and consumption are the focus of these stories, not romantic relationships or girls' growth through adolescence*." (N. R. Johnson, 2010, p. 68).

## 3.8 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that the use of brands in novels is an established literary technique, appearing across a wide range of genres. There is evidence that brands are used by authors to add realism to the story, and that they may also be used to support characterisation.

A number of researchers have undertaken both summative and qualitative content analyses to examine brand name usage in specific novels. Their findings suggest that the use of fashion brands in novels forms a key characteristic of certain fictional genres, notably blank fiction, the sex and shopping novel and chick lit and its derivatives.

Chick lit is a contemporary genre of women's popular fiction, which typically uses fashion brand names within its narratives, therefore it has been selected as the context for this study. The next chapter provides an introduction to chick lit.

# Chapter 4: Chick Lit

## 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce chick lit as a literary genre. The chapter begins with an overview of the development of chick lit, before discussing its classification as a genre and its defining features. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the current market for chick lit.

## 4.2 Definition and Origins of the Term 'Chick Lit'

The Oxford Dictionary defines *Chick Lit* simply as "*literature which appeals to young women*", but notes that the term is "*informal, chiefly derogatory*" (Oxford University Press, 2016b). The term is made up of two parts: *chick,* an informal (and often dismissive) term for a young woman; and *lit*, short for literature.

Gormley (2009, p. 1) provides a more comprehensive explanation of the term:

> ***"…****by the end of the 1990s the category and term chick lit had become established to describe novels written by women, (largely) for women, depicting the life, loves, trials and tribulations of their predominantly young, single, urban, female protagonists."*

Although the term *Chick Lit* is generally associated with commercial, humorous, popular fiction, featuring, written by, and aimed at, young women, the origin of the term is unclear. Harzewski (2011) claims that the term was first used by Princeton students as a dismissive name for a course in female literary tradition. However, Chris Mazza claims that she originated the term, along with her co-editor, Jeffery DeShell, as part of the title for a collection of short stories written by contemporary female writers published in 1995: *Chick-Lit: Postfeminist Fiction* (Harzewski, 2011; Mazza, 2006; Montoro, 2012). This anthology "*…sought to articulate a metalanguage for female experimentation in American Fiction"* (Harzewski, 2011, p. 44), and its stories dealt with a range of challenging themes, including violence, sex, mental illness and perversion, from a postfeminist perspective. Mazza claims that the use of the term *Chick-Lit* in the title of the anthology was deliberately ironic:

> *"…writers with double-X chromosomes have been set apart, frequently called "women writers" whilst the others remain, simply, wholly, "writers". What these women writers produce has been "women's fiction", and the rest, unconditionally, is "fiction" (or even "literature"). The translation to me always has been that men write about what's important; women write about what's important 'to women'. So our title of Chick-Lit was meant to point out this delusion, this second-class differentiation; not pretend it isn't there."* (Mazza, 2006, p. 28)

She reflects on the difference between her ironic, self-mocking use of the term, and its current use as a commercial genre in the publishing industry:

> *"But now, how is anyone to make a distinction? The chicks in commercial chick lit […] have stripped themselves of irony."* (Mazza, 2006, p. 28)

According to most sources (e.g. Davis-Kahl, 2008; Ferriss & Young, 2006b; Mazza, 2006; Montoro, 2012; Ryan, 2010) the term *chick lit* began to be associated with commercial women's fiction when *New York Times* journalist, James Wolcott, used it in a 1996 article in *The New Yorker* magazine: "*Hear Me Purr: Maureen Dowd and the rise of postfeminist chick-lit*". In this article he criticised female journalist Maureen Dowd (a *New York Times* columnist) and other women writers, labelling them as 'chicks':

> *"Today, a chick is a postfeminist in a party dress, a bachelorette too smart to be a bimbo, too refined to be a babe, too boojy to be a bohemian."* (Wolcott, 1996, p. 57)

He suggested that female writers in the 1990s had rejected the feminist ideals of their 1970s' predecessors in favour of girlish and flirtational writing, arguing that "*too much feminist and postfeminist writing has reverted in the nineties to a popularity-contest coquetry*." (Wolcott, 1996, p. 57). The reference to "chick-lit" in the title of Wolcott's article, appears to refer to Mazza's anthology of short stories, as he writes:

> *"One can spot this Noxzema gleam….in pop-fiction anthologies like "Chick-Lit," where the concerns of female characters seem fairly divided between getting laid and not getting laid."* (Wolcott, 1996, p. 54)

Mazza (2006) argues that Wolcott seemed to describe the commercial chick lit yet to come, rather than the short stories in her anthology; however, from this point, the term began to move from being an ironic, self-mocking, label for contemporary postfeminist literature, to a description of mainstream popular women's fiction.

The use of the term *chick lit* remains controversial. For many writers, it is seen as an insulting and patronising label. For example, journalist and novelist Elizabeth Day, writing in the Guardian stated:

> *"I suppose my problem with chick-lit is not the books it describes, but the term itself. I don't want to get rid of the books; just the irritating label. Why is it necessary to perpetuate this notion that women need a special kind of literature that isn't too taxing for their pretty little heads? Or that female authors – and it is only ever female authors – need to be packaged in a certain way in order to sell?"* (Day writing in Day & Perry, 2011)

## 4.3 Criticisms of the Genre

Chick Lit is considered by many to be a derogatory term, and the genre has generated a lot of critical response and condemnation. Caroline Smith states that the genre "*becomes an easy target for the critics' derision, relegated to both subordinate spaces—the popular and the female*." (Smith, 2008, p. 4).

Harzewski (2011) argues that the use of the term 'chick lit', and the criticism of the genre, is consistent with the historical tendency to denigrate commercial fiction written by women. This tendency can be seen in an essay by George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), published in the Westminster Review in 1856, titled "*Silly Novels by Lady Novelists*". In it, she identifies a range of sub-genres of women's fiction "*the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic.*" (Eliot, 1856, p. 442), but reserves the bulk of her criticism for what she describes as "*the mind-and-millinery series"* (Eliot, 1856, p. 442). She criticises their formulaic plots, unrealistically perfect heroines and clichéd dialogue, and berates their upper-class authors for wasting their education. Eliot's choice to write her own novels under a male pseudonym signals her desire to distance herself from these women novelists and their 'silly novels', however Harzewski (2006) suggests that Eliot's concern about women's novels and novelists is rooted in the history of the novel itself, and its position "*at the intersection of gender, sexuality and commerce*" (Harzewski, 2006, p. 30). She explains that, in the eighteenth century, many women writers capitalised on improved printing technologies and the expanding, middle-class, largely female, reading public, to achieve popular recognition and commercial success with their novels, "*inciting the wrath of their male counterparts"* (Harzewski, 2006, p. 30). This anger resulted in frequent attacks on women novelists by male writers. For example, in January 1855, Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), wrote a letter to his publisher in England, complaining:

> *"America is now given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash...*" (Hawthorne, 1855, quoted in Frederick, 1975, p. 231)

It is clear that Hawthorne particularly resents the commercial success of these "scribbling women" as he goes on to complain about their books selling "*by the 100,000*" (Hawthorne, 1855 quoted in Frederick, 1975, p. 231).

The dismissal of women's writing as "trash", and somehow less important than the writing of men, is challenged by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). This extended essay uses a fictional narrator to explore women both as writers of, and characters in, fiction. In it she argues:

> *"But it is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex; naturally, this is so. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking crudely, football and sport are 'important'; the worship of*

> *fashion, the buying of clothes 'trivial'. And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing–room. A scene in a battle-field is more important than a scene in a shop—everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists."* (Woolf, 1929)

Harzewski (2006) argues that chick lit continues this gendered debate about the value of the novel, and this is echoed by Modleski (2008) who asks:

> *"Will it come as a surprise to anyone that the condemners of the "damned mobs of scribbling women" (to use Nathaniel Hawthorne's notorious label) are bemoaning the success of chick lit, which seems to have taken by storm not only England and America, but many other countries as well? In fact the worldwide popularity of chick lit has led one writer to refer to the phenomenon as a "pandemic" – the avian flu, if you will, of the literary world – that is felling those portions of the female population not fortunate to have been immunized by adequate doses of the Great Books."* (Modleski, 2008)

Criticism of women's popular fiction, particularly romantic fiction, still persists, and critics are often women themselves; for example in *The Female Eunuch* Germaine Greer dismisses popular romance novels as "*trash"* and "*mush*" (Greer, 1971, p. 185), whilst Maureen Dowd (ironically, the primary target of Wolcott's diatribe against women writers) published a column in the *New York Times* in 2007, where she describes chick lit as "*all chick and no lit*" (Dowd, 2007).

Wells (2006) argues that, as chick lit is written almost exclusively by women and, similarly, read mostly by women, perceptions of the genre are still affected by the historical view that women's writing, in general, is held to be inferior to men's, and that women readers prefer lightweight novels to literary ones; thus, "*To judge whether an individual work of chick lit, or the genre as a whole, has literary merit is to participate in a long tradition of discounting both women writers and their readers."* (Wells, 2006, p. 48). However, she goes on to argue that: "*Chick lit is certainly one of the next generations of women's writing but, in spite of its capacity to invoke the questions that long swirled around women's literary writing, it is not the next generation of women's literature."* (Wells, 2006, p. 49).

The negative commentary relating to chick lit has led a number of prominent female writers to speak out and distance themselves from the genre; notably veteran novelist and Booker Prize nominee Beryl Bainbridge, who was quoted as saying:

> *"It is a froth sort of thing. What is the point in writing a whole novel about it? It just wastes time…"* (Bainbridge quoted in Ezard, 2001)

Whilst Nobel Prize winner, Doris Lessing, dismissed chick lit novels as "*instantly forgettable*" (Ezard, 2001), and said:

> *"It's a pity that so many young women are writing like that. I wonder if they are just writing like this because they think they are going to get published…It would be better, perhaps, if they wrote books about their lives as they really saw them and not these helpless girls, drunken, worrying about their weight and so on."* (Lessing quoted in Ezard, 2001)

These comments perhaps signal a generation gap between Bainbridge and Lessing and the writers and readers of chick lit, as it has been argued that both writers and readers of chick lit consider that the key point of difference of the genre is its realism. Chick lit deals with the lives of modern, every day, working young women and appeals to readers who want to see their own lives reflected in fiction (Ferriss & Young, 2006a).

Certainly, the commercial success of chick lit seems to draw criticism from more high-brow literary quarters. Whilst chick lit presents itself as a literary form, it is also closely linked to other popular entertainment media – for example, both Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City* started life as newspaper columns; whilst several chick lit novels have gone on to become successful films (e.g. *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *The Devil Wears Prada*) or television series (e.g. *Sex and the City*, *Gossip Girl*). Chick lit protagonists often work in the media, and as such, most chick lit novels are filled with references to consumer culture media, particularly women's magazines, and popular cultural icons, from celebrities, music and films to reality TV shows (Smith, 2008). As a result, chick lit highlights some of the tensions between high and popular culture in contemporary society (Harzewski, 2006).

## 4.4 Academic Response to Chick Lit

The academic response to chick lit, and its acceptance as a legitimate area of study, has been slow to develop (Davis-Kahl, 2008; Smith, 2008). It has been suggested that there is an assumption that popular, highly marketed, commercially successful literature is too 'low culture' to warrant serious academic consideration (Davis-Kahl, 2008). However, despite the widespread criticism of the genre, it has recently begun to draw scholarly attention, with academics considering its cultural and sociological implications for women (e.g. P. Butler & Desai, 2008; Harzewski, 2011), its place in literary history (e.g. Harzewski, 2006; Wells, 2006) , its stylistics (e.g. Montoro, 2012; Jautze et al., 2013), its translation (e.g. Parini, 2015; Ragaisiene, 2006) and its representations of consumption (e.g. Dorney, 2004; Patterson & Brown, 1999; Scanlon, 2005, 2013; C. A. Wilson, 2012b). In addition, chick lit novels are beginning to appear on reading lists for numerous undergraduate English Literature, Women's Studies and Popular Culture modules and courses (Smith, 2008; C. A. Wilson, 2012a).

## 4.5 Classifying the Chick Lit Genre

A literary genre is simply a label for a literary class or type (Cuddon, 1991); the label characterises the key elements that a reader may expect to find within a work of literature, with categories classified according to subject matter and/or style. Chick lit may be found within a range of different sections within a bookstore (e.g. contemporary fiction, humour, romance, women's popular fiction), however it exhibits features of three major categories of literature: postmodern fiction, postfeminist fiction and romantic fiction.

### 4.5.1 Postmodernism

Chick lit is a form of postmodern fiction (Harzewski, 2011). As previously discussed, postmodern fiction tends to be non-traditional or experimental in approach, employing irony, playfulness and/or black humour and characterised by narrative techniques such as fragmentation, metafiction, parody, pastiche, hyper-reality and intertextuality (Cuddon, 1991; Hossain & Karim, 2013). Whilst commercial chick lit may initially appear to have little in common with the experimental postmodern fiction of the 1960s and 1970s, there are a number of features which associate it with the postmodern movement. Chick lit has variously been described as a parody of traditional romance, bildungsroman and sex and shopping novels (Harzewski, 2011). If we consider *Bridget Jones's Diary* as the prototypical chick lit novel, it is written as a series of diary entries in a fragmented stream of consciousness. Intertextuality and pastiche are also key characteristics of the novel, with multiple parallels and references to both Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and the 1995 BBC TV adaptation of this novel. This intertextuality is taken one step further when Colin Firth, who played Mr. Darcy in the TV series, also plays Mark Darcy in the movie adaptation of Bridget Jones's Diary and is subsequently written into the novel's sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, which further alludes to Austen's *Persuasion* (Eckert, 2017).

Chick lit may also be considered to be postmodern in terms of its setting within and reflection of postmodern society. Chick lit characters live in the global, post-industrial, late capitalist society of the 1990s and 2000s; set adrift from their families they create (and recreate) their own identities in the city through conspicuous consumption. Brown (2003, pp. 16–17) argues that "*many sociologists, anthropologists, literary theorists and cultural studies specialists consider marketing and consumption to be central to the postmodern condition*". Therefore, much like Blank Generation fiction, its focus on consumption and the consumer society helps to mark chick lit as a postmodern genre. Similarly, Jameson (1991) considers postmodernism to be synonymous with "*spectacle or image society*" and "*media capitalism*" (Jameson, 1991, p. xviii). Chick lit is replete with mentions of popular media vehicles including films, TV programmes, websites, newspapers, and magazines, and as the typical chick lit protagonist works in a media-related occupation, she is situated at the centre of this aspect

of contemporary society, and thus is able to generate social observations on life in a postmodern world (Harzewski, 2011).

### 4.5.2 Postfeminism

Chick lit is also frequently identified and analysed as postfeminist fiction (e.g. Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Harzewski, 2011; Wolcott, 1996). Postfeminism refers to a cultural phenomenon following the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s; whereby liberal feminist ideals such as independence and freedom of choice are considered to be accepted 'common-sense', and feminist demands for equal pay, equal opportunities and reproductive rights are considered to have been met, thus rendering feminism outmoded and no longer relevant (Gormley, 2009).

The typical chick lit protagonist is too young to have been involved in the second wave feminist movement but benefits from the advances in equality made during this time. However, she also still experiences external expectations and personal desires for more traditional feminine ideals such as romance and family; therefore she is caught between competing demands to be strong and independent, whilst also retaining her femininity (Ferriss & Young, 2006a).

Montoro (2012) suggests that chick lit characters adopt an unorthodox approach to feminism. While they may profess support for feminist ideals, and describe themselves as feminists, they use feminist ideology as a source of comedy, rather than a serious issue. Feminist ideas are generally treated ambivalently in chick lit; some liberal feminist attitudes are accepted as common-sense by the characters, whilst, at the same time, more radical feminist ideas, and feminists themselves, are often portrayed as being over-rigid, anti-romance and extremist (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Harzewski, 2011). This contradiction is clearly illustrated in *Bridget Jones's Diary*; Bridget tells herself: "*I am a woman of substance and do not need men in order to be complete*" (Fielding, 1996, p. 30); however, she also says "*there is nothing so unattractive to a man as strident feminism"* (Fielding, 1996, p. 19).

A number of prototypical tenets of postfeminism have been identified. These include a focus on the individual and individual choice; a rejection of second-wave feminist anger against men; a return to femininity and sexuality; pleasure in popular culture and consumerism; and self-deprecating humour based on the discrepancy between the ideals presented by both feminism and the media, and the reality of modern life for women (Ferriss & Young, 2008). Most of these attitudes can be found in chick lit novels. For example, Guardian columnist, Suzanne Moore, argues that Bridget Jones is a perfect example of postfeminism:

> *"Bridget…was for me the epitome of post-feminism – vapid, consumerist and self-obsessed. Bridget's much-vaunted independence, gained on the back of the*

> *feminism of the previous two decades, manifested chiefly as the freedom to get pissed, appreciate her female friends and speak openly of her sexual desires."* (S. Moore, 2013)

### 4.5.3 Romantic Fiction

Chick lit is also generally considered to be a form of romantic fiction (P. Butler & Desai, 2008; Craddock, 2004; Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Gormley, 2009; Harzewski, 2006, 2011; Modleski, 2008; Montoro, 2012; Scanlon, 2013; Wherry, 2015). The Romance Writers of America state that a romance novel has two basic elements: a central love story and an emotionally-satisfying and optimistic ending (Romance Writers of America, n.d.). Montoro (2012) identifies several similarities between romances and chick lit: firstly, both are predominantly written by women for women readers; secondly both are produced and marketed as popular fiction; and thirdly, romantic resolutions are generally a key ingredient in the plot structure of both formats.

However, there are a number of factors which set chick lit apart from other romantic forms. Firstly, chick lit novels are primarily set in an urban location (Dorney, 2004; Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Gormley, 2009; Harzewski, 2006; Montoro, 2012; Ryan, 2010; Scanlon, 2013), whereas generic romantic fiction may be set in a broad range of locations. Secondly, there is less emphasis on the romance element of the plot. Wherry (2015, p. 59) suggests that chick lit is "*almost anti-romance*", with romance "*dislodged by sex and comedy"*. Thirdly, chick lit novels are humorous, with the genre sometimes described as 'romantic comedy' (Harzewski, 2006). The chick lit protagonists' self-depreciating humour (Wherry, 2015) and ability to make light of the trials and tribulations that she experiences (Montoro, 2012), helps to set the genre apart from the traditional romance (Harzewski, 2006).

Other features which help to distinguish chick lit novels from generic romances include the use of first-person narration; a preoccupation with identity and self-image, sex and sexuality and consumerism; the inclusion of relationships with friends, co-workers and family, as well as romantic relationships; the need for the heroine to balance personal relationships with her professional career; and the frequent use of a "happily-for-now" rather than "happily-ever-after" resolution (Wherry, 2015).

## 4.6 Influences and Antecedents of Chick Lit

Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) is generally identified as the starting point of the chick lit phenomenon and the cornerstone of the genre (Craddock, 2004; Dorney, 2004; Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Gormley, 2009; Modleski, 2008; Montoro, 2012; Smith, 2008; Wherry, 2015), whilst Candace Bushnell's *Sex in the City* (1996) is often identified as the second major source, and the first US example of chick lit (Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Gormley, 2009). Both novels started out as newspaper columns before making the transition to book format in 1996. Although very

different in style, both novels offer "parodic commentary" on key demographic and social changes taking place in the UK and US in the 1990s (Harzewski, 2011, p. 3). These changes included increasing higher education participation rates, increasing participation of women in the workforce, the rise of both single-person households and serial cohabitation, and the increasing age of first marriage; all leading to the emergence of a dynamic singles market and changing priorities for young urban professionals.

Although chick lit is generally acknowledged to have emerged in the 1990s, several scholars point out its connections to previous literary outputs, most notably the novel of manners and nineteenth century, heroine-centred, domestic fiction (Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Harzewski, 2006; Ryan, 2010; Smith, 2008). Ryan (2010) argues that there are numerous similarities between modern chick lit novels, and the work of both Austen and the Brontë sisters in the nineteenth century. Chick lit reinterprets the novel of manners in a contemporary setting, chronicling modern courtship behaviour, personal growth, dress and social norms (Harzewski, 2006; Ryan, 2010; Wells, 2006). Helen Fielding has admitted that the plot of *Bridget Jones's Diary* was based directly on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (Harzewski, 2011; Patterson & Brown, 2006). She also references *Pride and Prejudice* several times in the novel (Harzewski, 2011).

Edith Wharton is also frequently cited as a key influence for chick lit authors (e.g. Harzewski, 2011; Wells, 2006). Candace Bushnell, author of *Sex and the* City, acknowledges Wharton as a major literary influence (Harzewski, 2011). In addition, several chick lit novels reference the character Lily Bart from Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, and in particular the tensions that *The House of Mirth* reveals between looking good to attract a wealthy man and the financial debts incurred in maintaining a fashionable wardrobe (Harzewski, 2006).

Whilst chick lit may have its roots in women's nineteenth and early twentieth century fiction, Whelehan (2005) suggests that the feminist conscious-raising novels of the 1970s can be considered its popular fiction predecessors; the heroines of these novels are often trying to fix issues in their lives, as they negotiate their complex relationships with men. Laura Miller, columnist for the *New York Times Book Review*, concurs with this view, identifying Erica Yong's *Fear of Flying* (1974) as the antecedent of commercial chick lit. She is quoted as saying:

> *"Fear of Flying was one of the first and most successful popular confessional novels about a flawed but endearing young woman trying to sort out her life in a world that suddenly allowed women a lot more leeway. In that and in the book's humour and frankness, it now seems like a predecessor to what we now call Chick-Lit."* (Miller (2004) quoted in Mazza, 2006, p. 28)

This view is supported by popular chick lit author Jennifer Weiner, who acknowledges *Fear of Flying* as one of her major influences (Schillinger, 2013).

Whelehan (2005) also compares chick lit to the 'sex and shopping' novels of the 1970s and 1980s, written by authors such as Jackie Collins, Shirley Conran and Judith Krantz. Sex and conspicuous consumption figure heavily in both genres, but the chick lit heroine is less sure of herself than the powerful 'superwoman' featured in the sex and shopping novel; a woman who typically takes men on at their own game, building a business empire from the ground up.

Several authors also cite the influence of the Harlequin Mills and Boon (HM&B) romance, on the chick lit genre (Dowd, 2007; Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Harzewski, 2006, 2011; Montoro, 2012; Yardley, 2006). The HM&B romance boomed in the early 1970s and remains the best-selling subset of category fiction as well as the top-performing genre of paperback fiction (Harzewski, 2011). HM&B romances tend to be shorter than a standard novel; they are released at standard intervals and often published under a series name relating to the novels' core theme or content (e.g. Historical, Nocturne, Blaze, Spice) (Wherry, 2015). Harzewski (2011) suggests that chick lit is an heir to HM&B's 'career romance' titles which emerged towards the end of the 1970s. She also suggests that, insofar as many chick lit heroines have romantic relationships with their bosses or senior colleagues, the genre extends the HM&B 'Temptations' series, where the boss figure is typically the romantic hero; however, Yardley (2006) suggests that chick lit is a development from the HM&B 'city girl' books. This label was given to a line of novels set in cities, which had a different set of characteristics from those generally appearing in the HM&B serial romances (Montoro, 2012). Regardless of which HM&B series bears the most relationship to chick lit, there are some clear parallels between the HM&B romance and the chick lit genre; Harzewski (2011) argues that:

> *"…chick lit is a postfeminist alternative to the Harlequin deploying a distinct set of generic tropes. Chick lit is a partial parody of Harlequin romance modifying the latter through greater realism and a different representation of the hero."* (Harzewski, 2011, p. 26)

## 4.7 The Chick Lit Reader

Research suggests that the typical chick lit reader is young and female (Birdi, 2014); notably, she is perceived as being significantly younger than the typical reader of traditional (HM&B) romance novels. Whilst she enjoys the genre and gets pleasure from reading the novels (Montoro, 2012), she is a less avid reader than the traditional romance novel reader (Birdi, 2014). Chick lit readers read for escapism and are generally looking for an easy or light read (Birdi, 2014). The predictability of the chick lit genre is important to readers - they expect a happy ending and a successful romantic resolution (Birdi, 2014; Montoro, 2012) and are not afraid to criticise novels which fail to conform with these expectations

(Montoro, 2012). Furthermore, chick lit readers are more likely to look to identify with characters than readers of other genres (Birdi, 2014), therefore a degree of realism is important.

## 4.8 Defining Features of Chick Lit

There are a number of features which identify chick lit and distinguish it from other, related, genres. These include: (i) the cover art; (ii) the characteristics of the main protagonist; (iii) the relationships between characters; (iv) the focus on the protagonist's career; (v) the urban setting; and (vi) the centrality of fashion, brands and consumption to the narrative.

### 4.8.1 Cover Art

Chick lit novels are usually clearly identifiable by their pastel coloured covers, with cursive fonts and illustrations of young women in urban environments and/or fashionable consumer goods (handbags, shoes, shopping bags, drinks and jewellery) (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Gormley, 2009; Modleski, 2008; Ryan, 2010; Smydra, 2007).

The covers are usually illustrated, often in a cartoon style. Men are rarely depicted on chick lit covers, whereas other popular romance covers frequently feature "*a riveting hero of phallic intensity*" (Harzewski, 2006, p. 38), or a hero and heroine locked in an embrace (Harzewski, 2011). Instead, the focus of the chick lit cover is usually on an individual woman, often combined with symbols of fashionable consumerism. In the few instances where a man appears on the cover of a chick lit book, he may be fragmented, or appear in a downstage position (Harzewski, 2011).

The distinctive chick lit cover art helps the books to attract the target reader through a recognisable visual appeal (Harzewski, 2006). The feminine pink and pastel colour schemes act as design shorthand, signifying that the novels are clearly for women; whilst the "*retro, kitschy designs suggest artifice and exaggeration, hailing their targeted audience as sophisticated consumers*" (Gormley, 2009). The colours work with the illustrations and typography on the covers to suggest frivolousness and playfulness (Montoro, 2012).

Although most commentators identify pink as the dominant colour used on chick lit covers, Montoro's analysis of ten chick lit novels suggests that "*pink does not have to, nor does it, overwhelmingly always feature in every Chick Lit book jacket produced."* (Montoro, 2012, p. 49). In her sample she found that only five of the ten books that she examined could be acknowledged as prototypically pastel, with lilac, soft pink, sky blue and off-white being the preferred colour choices, although she notes that this observation refers primarily to the background of the covers (Montoro, 2012).

Harzewski (2006) argues that chick lit novels have brought a new visual contribution to the marketplace, revealing a strong interplay with advertising and commodity culture. She suggests that

the books' cover designs have influenced the design of clothing, cosmetics, beauty product packaging and stationery; and that the design participates in a feedback loop with fashion trends (Harzewski, 2006, p. 35).

Interestingly, both Gormley (2009) and Montoro (2012) point out that *Bridget Jones's Diary*, despite being acknowledged as the prototype for the genre, does not feature any of the typical chick lit cover art elements. The original cover uses a sepia-toned photograph of a woman, rather than pastel toned drawings; and the text avoids the typical cursive, handwriting style favoured on most chick lit covers – instead it is "*non-sloping, not excessively curved, not connected, regular and void of any flourishes"* (Montoro, 2012, p. 56). Because *Bridget Jones's Diary* was published at the start of the chick lit genre, it could be argued that the characteristics of the genre's cover style had not yet been established, although other early chick lit books published at around the same time (e.g. Marion Keyes's *Watermelon* (1996) and Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City* (1996)) were already showing some of the key traits. Montoro argues that it is perhaps the atypicality of *Bridget Jones's Diary* that helped it to stand out among the homogenisation subsequently found within the genre (Montoro, 2012). Gormley argues that the cover art of Bridget Jones's Diary plays with a subtle life-art tension and positions the novel somewhere between literary and popular fiction, whereas later chick lit covers position the novels firmly as light entertainment (Gormley, 2009).

### 4.8.2 The Chick Lit Protagonist

The typical chick lit protagonist is a twenty- or thirty-something, white, middle or upper-middle class, single, childless, urban, British or American, heterosexual graduate, working in a relatively low-level job in the media and searching for a romantic partner (Gormley, 2009; Harzewski, 2011; Modleski, 2008; Smith, 2008). Whilst the majority of chick lit continues to focus on young, white, middle class women; the demographic for the genre has expanded and many of the newer offshoots of the genre focus on protagonists outside these categories (e.g. Black and Latino chick lit, mommy lit, hen lit and widow lit) (Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Smith, 2008).

The chick lit protagonist is intended to be someone that the reader can identify with; she is therefore not perfect, prompting the readers' compassion (Ferriss & Young, 2006a). In terms of outer appearance, the heroine is usually attractive, however she may not appreciate this, and is rarely satisfied with her looks. As Wells observes:

> *"With beauty, chick-lit writers must toe a fine line. If the heroine is too stunning, readers may resent her; if she is too ordinary looking (let alone unattractive), she gives readers nothing to admire….A heroine who is completely free of care about her looks and happily self-accepting is nowhere to be found in chick lit, an absence*

> *that suggests that such a character is too unrealistic to appeal to image-conscious women readers."* (Wells, 2006, p. 59)

Heroines often display negative character traits – they may be shallow, insecure, neurotic, clumsy, ditsy or compulsive and they generally make a series of poor decisions throughout the story; however, they usually have some redeeming qualities, such as a sense of humour, loyalty to friends, a generous nature, or a consistently positive outlook on life. The protagonists often appear to be preoccupied with fashion and consumer goods; however Ferriss & Young (2006a) argue that this does not make them superficial in their outlook, but instead it is merely a reflection of the contemporary consumer culture in which the novels are set.

Chick lit is perceived as being a realistic reflection of the lives of working young women (Ferriss & Young, 2006a), and this realism is often achieved through the author using her own personal or professional experiences as inspiration for the plots (Craddock, 2004; Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Smith, 2008). In many cases there are clear parallels between the protagonist and the author, and these are often highlighted in the authors' biographies contained within the books (Smith, 2008). For example, Angela Clark, the protagonist of Lindsey Kelk's *I Heart New York* is a children's book writer, with a passion for designer shoes, who moves from London to New York. Whereas the author's biography describes Kelk as "*a writer and children's book editor"*, who "*likes to wear shoes, shop for shoes and judge the shoes of others*". We are also told that she *"loves living in New York but misses Sherbet Fountains, London and drinking Gin & Elderflower cocktails with her friends"* (Kelk, 2010a, sec. Author's Biography).

The parallels between author and protagonist may also be continued with the appearance of the author in the photograph used on the book jacket. Smith (2008) points out that Helen Fielding's author photograph for the hardcover, 1998 British edition of *Bridget Jones Diary*, mimics the photography used on the cover design, showing Fielding in profile, smoking a cigarette, in a similar pose to the model shown in silhouette on the cover.

The result of these deliberately drawn parallels, together with chick lit's confessional, first person narrative style, sometimes give the impression that chick lit is not fiction at all. For example, an interview with Lauren Weisberger, author of *The Devil Wears Prada*, describes the novel as: "*A part-autobiographical account of Weisberger's time as [Anna] Wintour's assistant*" (Teeman, 2013, p. 4), although the author is careful to separate herself from Andy, the novel's protagonist, and denies that the character, Miranda Priestly (the 'devil' in the title) is a direct transposition of Anna Wintour (Das, 2010; Teeman, 2013). Similarly, Helen Fielding grew so tired of being asked if she was the model for Bridget Jones, that she felt that she had to distance herself from her character. According to an interview in the New York Times, she said:

> *''At one point I was going to put a sign around my neck that said, 'No, I am not Bridget Jones,' […] Bridget wasn't me…She was an exaggeration of bits of me.''* (Fielding quoted in De Vries, 2004)

Smith (2008) argues that the characters, readers and authors of chick lit are so similar and interlinked, that the genre blurs what might have previously been considered a firm distinction between protagonist, reader and author.

### 4.8.3 Relationships

Relationships form a key element of chick lit. Whilst there is usually a romantic relationship at the core of the story, the relationship of the protagonist with her family and friends is often just as important to the narrative (Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Harzewski, 2006; Mabry, 2006; Wherry, 2015).

#### *4.8.3.1 Relationships with Friends and Family*

Pérez-Serrano (2009) argues that the family is an important institution in chick lit; however, Harzewski (2006, 2011) suggests that the nuclear family is frequently absent in chick lit novels – either because of geographic separation, or because immediate family members are dead. She notes that many chick lit protagonists are orphans, and suggests that this common romance trope echoes the Cinderella story and classic heroine-centred novels such as *Jayne Eyre* (Harzewski, 2006).

Where they are featured, nuclear families in chick lit tend not to be portrayed as particularly nurturing; instead they are depicted as something of an annoyance (Guerrero, 2006). The heroine often has to negotiate the conflict between her family's expectations and the life that she wants for herself (Harzewski, 2011). For example, in her analysis of British chick lit, Knowles (2004b) argues that the heroines are hampered in their quest to achieve "*total metropolitanism*" by their provincial parents "*who burden them with the guilt of traditional suburban British middle-class values and expectations*" (Knowles, 2004b, p. 38); however, there is generally a degree of separation between the protagonist and her family – her parents are self-contained and removed, and don't form part of the protagonist's everyday life (Guerrero, 2006).

In *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Bridget refers to her group of friends as her 'urban family'. This concept of a friendship group functioning as family is a key feature of many chick lit novels, where the single female protagonist, living and working in the city, is geographically separated from her suburban-dwelling nuclear family. The 'urban family' provides the emotional support and closeness that is traditionally expected from the nuclear family, and often, these pseudo-familial bonds are perceived as being as strong as those of the romantic relationship (Mabry, 2006).

The 'urban family' is made up from close friends who have "*chosen each other*" (Pérez-Serrano, 2009), and therefore its members arguably understand each other better than biological families. These

friends perform a number of functions for the chick lit protagonist: they are the group that she goes out with for entertainment, but they are also there to provide help, advice and shelter in difficult situations. They are the people that the protagonist consults to resolve uncertainties and turns to for support when she is upset, whilst romantic partners are frequently portrayed as the originators of such conflict (Pérez-Serrano, 2009).

Although these friendship groups are predominantly female, relationships between women in chick lit novels are not always congenial. Many novels feature a female "enemy", who may be the protagonist's rival – either professionally or romantically. This trope draws on the notion of women as scheming and manipulative, particularly in relation to men (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006).

Another common trope in chick lit is the presence of a gay, male friend for the protagonist (Gormley, 2009; Ryan, 2010; Yardley, 2006). Gormley (2009) argues that the gay male friend virtually replaces the traditional heterosexual hero. Similarly, Dorney (2004) argues that the friendship between the protagonist and the homosexual male is successful primarily because it lacks the sexual tension of heterosexual relationships, and thus its existence challenges the illusion of a successful relationship with a heterosexual man. However, Ryan (2010) notes that the trope of the gay best friend has become overused in chick lit, and that many authors now abstain from including it in their novels.

#### *4.8.3.2 Romantic Relationships*

According to Wells (2006, p. 49) "*Every chick-lit novel centers on a love plot"* but the nature of the plot varies according to the protagonist's age and marital status. Single protagonists may attempt several relationships, only one of which will prove successful in the end; whilst those protagonists who are already in a relationship at the beginning of the novel will either put the relationship in jeopardy for a period, before resolving their issues and renewing the relationship; or will endure the collapse of the relationship and begin a new, better, relationship with a different partner.

Chick lit heroines are generally presented as being financially independent, career-orientated and sexually assertive; however, despite this, they frequently require saving by the hero, whether this is from unscrupulous characters, single motherhood, financial ruin or their own self-destructive tendencies (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006). In this sense, men in chick lit are still presented as protectors whose role is to rescue the heroine.

Whilst traditional romances usually end with an engagement or marriage, few chick lit novels end in this way. They typically end with a mutual declaration of love, after a series of misunderstandings, with marriage remaining a future possibility (Wells, 2006). This lack of a definitive, marriage-based, 'happy ever after' ending, reflects society's changing attitudes toward romance. Chick lit novels

demonstrate a greater degree of cynicism about love and relationships than traditional romance novels, highlighting changing cultural values (Wherry, 2015). In traditional romance novels, there is usually a clear romantic hero, with the story focussing on this one male complement for the heroine (Harzewski, 2006), however chick lit novels often feature serial dating, with several 'Mr. Wrongs' before the heroine meets 'Mr. Right' (Harzewski, 2011; Mabry, 2006; Ryan, 2010; Yardley, 2006).

Harzewski (2011) argues that men are not really valued as individuals in chick lit, but instead are simply a means to a lifestyle or wedding. She states that chick lit "*virtually jettisons the figure of the heterosexual hero, with Manolo Blahniks upstaging men*" (Harzewski, 2006, p.38), suggesting that the genre relegates the hero to more of a background figure, whilst commodities are foregrounded. This can clearly be seen in *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic*; where, in the final scene of the novel, the protagonist, Becky, is in bed with the hero, Luke, following the culmination of their romance plot. However, Becky performs her last piece of shopping in the novel whilst in bed, buying some NK Malone sunglasses from a television shopping channel. According to C.A Wilson (2012b), this is to be expected: "*Because Becky's shopping, not her relationship with Luke, has been center stage throughout the novel, it makes sense that the novel would end with the shopping plot."* (C. A. Wilson, 2012b, p. 222).

Although the romantic hero may be relegated to a supporting role in chick lit, sex and sexuality are regularly featured in the genre. Unlike the traditional romance heroine, the chick lit protagonist is rarely a virgin (Harzewski, 2011). Chick lit authors tend to view sex as a necessary part of the development of the romantic plot, and characters talk frankly and humorously about sex and sexual satisfaction (Harzewski, 2011; Wells, 2006). Sex scenes are rarely either extensive or graphic, and they tend to be described in a matter-of-fact way (Wells, 2006). Sex is not always deemed as satisfactory by the protagonist, and the heroine may engage in several sexual relationships, with varying degrees of pleasure and fulfilment, before she finds the right man. In this way, sex becomes a way for the heroine to explore her own identity and express her sexual desires (Mabry, 2006).

### 4.8.4 Career

Another of the key features of chick lit is that it deals with the protagonist's work life as well as a romantic plot, highlighting the challenges of successfully negotiating both simultaneously. In this sense, it offers a greater degree of realism to the modern female reader (Harzewski, 2011).

Most chick lit protagonists work in industries that are perceived as being glamorous, these typically include jobs in the media, fashion and advertising (Ryan, 2010). Yardley suggests that these are "*the sort of positions that readers would love to experience vicariously*" (Yardley, 2006, p. 11); however, the protagonist is often in a junior position and therefore the role is not always pictured as either glamorous or enjoyable.

For the most part, chick lit presents work as a background to the story, its role being to generate funds to support the protagonist's shopping activities (Ferriss & Young, 2006a); however, some chick lit novels focus specifically on the heroine's professional life, such as Lauren Weisberger's *The Devil Wears* Prada, or Nicola Kraus's *The Nanny Diaries.* The workplace also serves as a place to meet men in chick lit. For example, Bridget Jones has an affair with Daniel Cleaver, her boss at a publishing company; whilst Becky Bloomwood (protagonist of the *Shopaholic*) novels, meets her future husband, Luke Brandon (owner of a financial PR company) when she is working as a financial journalist.

### 4.8.5 Urban Setting

A key feature of most chick lit novels is an urban setting (Ferriss & Young, 2006b; Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Gormley, 2009; Ryan, 2010; Scanlon, 2005; C. A. Wilson, 2012a). This setting provides readers with an insight into "*a more exciting, fast-paced, high-toned lifestyle*" (Yardley, 2006, p. 10), whilst "*the city's frenetic activity parallels chick lit's fast-moving plots"* (Harzewski, 2011, p. 30). The urban setting is also closely linked to the jobs that chick lit heroines undertake, as industries such as media, fashion or advertising tend to be based in large cities. In practice, this means that many chick lit novels are set in London or New York. This is confirmed by Knowles (2004b), who states:

> *"The first observation that emerges from a spatial and geographical analysis of British chicklit novels is that they are almost inevitably set in London."* (Knowles, 2004b, p. 38)

The urban setting is also important to the consumerism aspect of chick lit. Living in a city gives the characters access to a wide range of shopping opportunities and fashionable products; and even though comparable shopping opportunities may be available in provincial cities, the intrinsic glamour of cosmopolitan cities such as London and New York helps to justify their choice as the setting for many chick lit novels (Knowles, 2004a).

Few chick lit heroines are actually native-born Londoners or New Yorkers; instead they may have been brought up in the suburbs or another smaller town or city outside the metropolis. They presumably move to the city for work; however, cities are also places where "*anonymity and identity can be crafted*" (Knowles, 2004b, p. 38), and this helps the heroine to explore and establish her own identity, separate from her roots.

### 4.8.6 Fashion, Brands & Consumption

Conspicuous consumption, particularly of branded fashion items, is a central theme of many chick lit novels. In their comparative analysis of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Nick Hornby's lad lit novel, *High Fidelity*, Patterson & Brown (1999) argue that:

> *"From a marketing perspective, perhaps the most striking thing about contemporary British novels is their interpenetration of confessionalism and consumption. Autobiographical novels are replete with brand names, retail stores, shopping expeditions and reflections on consumer behaviour. Their protagonists, as a rule, don't shop in department stores, they shop in Debenhams; they don't wear jeans, they wear Levi's; they don't drink champagne, they drink Moet & Chandon; they don't watch television, they watch Eastenders. And so it goes on, and on, and on … it seems that the characters in confessional novels are firmly ensconced in the commodity culture of our postmodern marketing environment"* (Patterson & Brown, 1999, p. 3)

In chick lit, representations of commodity consumption often focus on luxury and designer branded fashion items. Wearing designer brands helps characters to project an image of luxury and status to others (Van Slooten, 2006), therefore brands are used as a code for lifestyle in chick lit (Dorney, 2004). The brand names are frequently used without any explanation as to what they might be or how much they cost. It is assumed that readers are knowledgeable about fashion brands, and that they understand the significance and status of the names (Dorney, 2004; Ryan, 2010; Yardley, 2006).

Commodity consumption in chick lit represents not only a source of pleasure and conscious self-fashioning on behalf of the protagonists, but also signifies their independence. For the most part, their conspicuous consumption of branded fashion products signals their role as an individual within the wider capitalist system. Their purchases signify their ability to both earn and to spend money on non-essential goods of their own choice (P. Butler & Desai, 2008; Philips, 2000; Van Slooten, 2006).

Smith (2008) suggests that Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic* books are particularly notable for their use of fashion brand names, arguing that the brands in the narrative *"might affect Kinsella's reader in the same way that covert advertising might affect the readers of women's magazines"* (Smith, 2008, p. 35). Throughout the novels, Becky, the protagonist, details what she is wearing through brands. She imagines that others are also interested in what she is wearing, as if she is being photographed for a fashion magazine:

> *"It's a habit of mine, itemising all the clothes I'm wearing, as though for a fashion page. I've been doing it for years—ever since I used to read Just Seventeen. Every issue, they'd stop a girl on the street, take a picture of her, and list all her clothes. 'T Shirt: Chelsea Girl, Jeans: Top Shop; Shoes: borrowed from a friend.' I used to read those lists avidly, and to this day, if I buy something from a shop that's a bit uncool, I cut the label out. So that if I'm ever stopped in the street, I can pretend I don't know where it's from."* (Kinsella, 2000, p. 16)

Brands help Becky to define herself as a fashionable individual, and also reinforce her own sense of identity (Van Slooten, 2006).

Keeping up with fashion has a cost, and ultimately, Becky's addiction to fashion and shopping results in severe financial problems. According to Jennifer Scanlon, this is a typical outcome in chick lit: "*Chick*

*lit protagonists habitually spend, besting each other not only with their brand name acumen but also with their degrees of casually-induced debt"* (Scanlon, 2013, p. 904); however chick lit there are rarely any long-lasting consequences of excessive consumption. Becky is rescued by a new, well-paying, job in television, and her romance with the wealthy hero, Luke. In detailing their protagonists' shopping sprees and fashion choices, chick lit novels allow readers a safe outlet for their own hedonistic consumerist fantasies. Readers can live vicariously through the consumption of the characters, without having to face the financial consequences themselves (Van Slooten, 2006; C. A. Wilson, 2012b).

Although most scholars identify commodity consumption of fashion items to be a central theme in chick lit novels, Montoro (2012) uses a corpus stylistics approach to examine the language in a sample of chick lit novels, and concludes that, although mentions of beauty products and clothes feature recurrently in the sample, chick lit characters "*do not talk so much about clothes, beauty products or shoes as they are deemed to do*" (Montoro, 2012, p. 97). She acknowledges that the results from the novels in her sample do not necessarily extrapolate to the genre as a whole but maintains the solidity of her conclusions. However, the software that she uses identifies and compares only generic terms associated with clothing (e.g. make-up, trousers, shoes), whereas chick lit often replaces such terms with brand names (Touche Éclat, Levi's, Louboutins, etc.), so her findings warrant further investigation and analysis.

## 4.9 Developments and Off-Shoots of Chick Lit

Since its introduction, chick lit has morphed and developed, giving rise to a number of variants or sub-genres. Yardley (2006) identifies numerous off-shoots emerging from the original chick lit formula, including: Chick Lit Mystery (Tart Noir); Small Towns, Chick Lit style; Mommy Lit; Hen Lit (chick lit focused on women over 40); Widow Lit; Bride Lit; Full-figured Chick Lit; Young Adult Chick Lit; Lad Lit (novels by male authors, such as Nick Hornby, aimed predominantly at men); Paranormal Chick Lit; Ethnic Chick Lit; and Christian Chick Lit (Yardley, 2006). Other variants include regional versions (such as 'Southern Fried Chick Lit') and those focused on specific careers, such as Assistant Lit or Nanny Lit (Ferriss & Young, 2006a).

Although all of these sub-genres share some similarities with chick lit, Montoro (2012) argues that the relationship of some of them to the archetypal chick lit novel can be questioned. In particular she suggests that whilst bride lit and mommy lit might be seen as the logical progression for the twenty- and thirty-something heroines of the classic 1990s chick lit novel, who are now 'grown up' and trying to juggle a different set of responsibilities, other variants, such as hen lit and widow lit might be too far removed from the core concerns established by the original chick lit works. The release of the third

Bridget Jones novel in 2013 (*Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy)*, would seem to contradict this, as the original chick lit heroine is now a 51-year-old widow with two small children. Bridget has aged at the same pace as the thirty-something readers from the 1990s, and now has a new set of concerns, presumably some of which are shared by the older readers.

Montoro also questions the inclusion of lad lit as an offshoot of chick lit. She distinguishes between male authors who write under a female (or ambiguous) pseudonym, but who otherwise keep to the fundamental tenets of the genre (such as the obligatory female protagonist); and those who write as men and transpose some of the common concerns of chick lit into a primarily male world (using a male protagonist). She accepts the first group as chick lit, but suggests that the second group of authors, including writers such as Nick Hornby and David Nicholls, form a category which may not generally be considered as chick lit by purists (Montoro, 2012).

In terms of international development, chick lit has historically been viewed primarily as a transatlantic phenomenon (Harzewski, 2011). The majority of chick lit novels are originally written and published in English, highlighting the dominance of the UK and US markets for the genre. However, chick lit is now also being written and published in other countries; for example, Sellei (2006) writes about the influence of Bridget Jones on Hungarian chick lit, whilst Montoro (2012) identifies examples of chick lit novels written in Russian, Swedish and Portuguese, and both Donadio (2006) and Harzewski (2011) suggest that Indonesian *sastra wangi* (or 'fragrant literature') is a close relation of Anglo-American chick lit.

## 4.10 The Rise and Fall of Chick Lit

Chick lit has been phenomenally successful from a commercial perspective. Its initial sales growth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century was described as a 'commercial tsunami' (Zernike, 2004) and a 'pandemic' (Donadio, 2006). The sales of the genre were so large that several publishers created separate imprints just for chick lit books, including Harlequin (*Red Dress Ink* launched in 2001), Simon & Schuster (*Downtown Press*, launched in 2003) and Kensington (*Strapless*, launched in 2003) (Cabot, 2003; Coburn, 2012; Danford, 2003; Davis-Kahl, 2008; Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Gormley, 2009; Latham, 2012; Wherry, 2015).

It was reported that chick lit books earned more than $71m in the USA for publishers in 2002 (Cabot, 2003; Gormley, 2009), and by 2005 the *Wall Street Journal* quoted figures predicting chick lit sales of around $137m in the USA that year, representing strong annual growth of 7% (against an increase of just 1% in the US book sales market as a whole, and a decline of 6% in the generic romance sector) (Trachtenberg, 2005).

Bloom (2008) argues that the success of commercial women's fiction in the late twentieth century was, in part, due to the continuing dominance of female readers in the fiction market. As female readers comprise the bulk of the market, the publishers had "*no choice but to cater to such readers' needs*". He also points to industry changes playing a part:

> *"As almost three quarters of all publishing staff were women, and by the late twentieth century many had commanding jobs, the symbiosis of market demand, publisher response and author commissions put female sensibility at the centre of fictional narrative"* (Bloom, 2008, p. 74).

Publishers used pastel-coloured book covers with distinctive iconography to identify novels as chick lit and establish it as a separate category within the women's fiction market (Dowd, 2007; Gormley, 2009; Modleski, 2008; Montoro, 2012). The covers helped consumers to identify the genre, and therefore made selection of the books in crowded book stores easier (Gormley, 2009). Similarly, the formulaic design helped to market the books to supermarket buyers, where easily recognisable covers help consumers to make quick purchase decisions in the supermarket aisle (Gormley, 2009; Neill, 2008). Whilst chick lit rarely had a dedicated section within book shops, booksellers tended to group chick lit novels together in coordinated displays to draw attention to them and encourage purchase. In addition, some titles were heavily marketed to the trade and press (Danford, 2003).

The sales of individual chick lit authors highlight the popularity of the genre in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Chick lit regularly made the 'bestsellers' lists; for example, Ferriss & Young (2006a) report that seven chick lit books spent a total of ninety weeks in the US *Publishers Weekly* best-seller list in 2002. Similarly, Gormley (2009) reports that Marian Keyes appeared in the top five of UK *The Bookseller's Top 100* in 2005, achieving sales of 488,508 with her novel *The Other Side of the Story* (2004), whilst in 2007, she was in third place in the same chart, with *Anybody Out There?* (2006) selling 585,026 copies – these sales figures are huge when compared to the 'average' novel, which sells approximately 5,000 copies (Gormley, 2009). As a result, bestselling authors, such as Jenny Colgan, Freya North and Louise Bagshawe commanded big advances for their novels (Bloom, 2008). Some reports suggest that, at the height of the chick lit boom, publishers were offering mid-six figure advances for chick lit books (Coburn, 2012; Latham, 2012). Numerous chick lit books were made into movies (including: *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) and *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2009) (Goodreads.com, 2016)),with the film rights for some chick lit novels being optioned for more than $1 million before the books were even published (Ferriss & Young, 2006a).

However, in 2011, the chick lit bubble appeared to burst. Several news sources ran stories proclaiming 'the death of chick lit', based on an article in *The Bookseller*, published in September 2011. In this

article it was suggested that 2011 had been a difficult year for women's commercial fiction, with both new and established authors struggling for sales in the recession:

> *"Although there is no specific Nielsen BookScan category for commercial women's fiction, by comparing their most recent mass market paperback novels to their previous ones, even some of the genre's household names are seeing their sales fall (in fact around three-quarters of the Top 20 commercial women's fiction writers have seen sales of their most recent mass market paperback decline and the overall decline across the top 20 is 10%)—Marian Keyes' latest The Brightest Star in the Sky (Penguin) has sold just over 262,000 copies since February, a healthy figure, but 42% down from This Charming Man's (Penguin) similar first 29 weeks of sales in 2008"* (F. Wood & Stone, 2011)

The article goes on to identify a number of other well-known chick lit authors whose sales had declined in 2011.

Several possible reasons have been proposed for this apparent decline in chick lit sales. Firstly, the increasing popularity of ebooks (which were not included in the Nielsen BookScan figures) (Sherwin, 2011); however this is largely dismissed in *The Bookseller* article, as it quotes Martin Higgins, Sales Director of publisher Transworld, who says:

> *"…. If you felt there was a cause and effect between e-books and the shortfall in women's fiction, well, that doesn't seem to be the case—it just seems that people aren't buying women's fiction in the volume they used to a year or 18 months ago."* (Higgins quoted in Wood & Stone, 2011)

Chick lit author JoJo Moyes, commenting in *The Telegraph*, disagreed with Higgins' assessment, citing another interview in *The Bookseller*, which suggested that ebooks account for a disproportionate number of sales of women's fiction (Moyes, 2011). She also quotes fellow chick lit author, Jenny Colgan, who stated:

> *"Digital downloads have been really successful with young women's fiction. A lot of chick-lit readers are tech-savvy, and they read a lot."* (Colgan, 2011 quoted in Moyes, 2011)

*The Economist*'s Prospero blog supports this view, suggesting that readers may prefer to consume chick lit and romantic fiction on e-readers in order to hide their reading choices from others:

> *"Some think it possible that chick lit, like its steamier cousin, romance, is more readily consumed on e-readers, without the tell-all wrapper"* (Prospero, 2012).

The 2011 decline in chick lit sales has also been blamed on economic factors, with a squeeze on supermarket spending leading to retailers reducing the number of titles they ordered (Sherwin, 2011). This, in combination with rising food prices and a general climate of austerity, led to a significant reduction in book purchases through supermarkets. As women's fiction is predominantly sold in the

supermarket sector, it was impacted more than other categories (Paxman, 2011; F. Wood & Stone, 2011).

A third potential reason suggested for the decline in chick lit sales, was the influence of TV book clubs. It was argued that book club recommendations were encouraging readers to become more adventurous in their choice of genre, and to 'read up' (Paxman, 2011; Sherwin, 2011; F. Wood & Stone, 2011). A number of other genres were becoming popular at the time, so it is likely that some readers were changing their reading preferences. Competing genres included the paranormal/vampire romance genre, exemplified by Stephanie Meyer's young adult novel, *Twilight* (2005); the 'skandi-crime' genre, initiated by the success of *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2008) (Prospero, 2012); and the erotic/BDSM fiction genre, popularised by E.L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* (initially released as a self-published ebook in 2011).

A number of commentators argued that the chick lit genre had been over-marketed and that readers were simply tired of it (Prospero, 2012; Sherwin, 2011). As Bloom (2008) observes:

> *"The market became saturated with Bridget Jones clone novels promoted to exhaustion in supermarket displays, on the shelves of W.H. Smith and in the windows of major book-selling chains."* (Bloom, 2008, p. 75)

This is a view backed up by chick lit author Kathy Lette, who stated:

> *"The market has been flooded with a lot of second-rate writing…Many 'chick lit' books are just Mills & Boon with Wonderbras, with the heroines waiting to be rescued by a knight in shining Armani. So, perhaps, in this economic downturn, a creative cull may ensure that only literary lionesses prevail."* (Kathy Lette quoted in Sherwin, 2011)

The press coverage at the time suggested that many established female writers shared this viewpoint, welcoming the 'death of chick lit' as an opportunity to get their work taken more seriously. Some writers complained that their work had been wrongly marketed as chick lit, when in fact it dealt with serious issues (Prospero, 2012). This is a view backed up by the literary editor of *Marie Claire* magazine, who is quoted as saying:

> *"Chick lit has become a derogatory term. I'm surprised when I see that a lot of books are sold in covers with shoes and cupcakes because often the subject matter of the book inside isn't frothy and frivolous."* (Eithne Farry quoted in Sherwin, 2011)

The decline in sales caused publishers to re-evaluate their enthusiasm for the genre. The specialist chick lit imprints (Red Dress Ink, Downtown Press and Strapless) had all been closed by 2012 (Coburn, 2012; Latham, 2012); however Coburn (2012) suggests that many of the chick lit authors were still being published by the same publishing house, the publishers had simply decided that they did not need dedicated imprints to reach the target audience. Nevertheless, chick lit authors reported

declining advances for books and difficulty in getting proposals for chick lit novels accepted (Coburn, 2012; Latham, 2012).

Coburn (2012) suggests that these issues were not exclusive to the chick lit genre. She quotes Jill Marr, a US literary agent, who said "*We are having more trouble selling everything*"; however, Marr argued that chick lit had enduring appeal because "*women are the big book buyers, and they're always going to want to read about nights on the town, a great shoe sale and the hunky guy next door*." (Marr quoted in Coburn, 2012).

### 4.10.1 The Current Market for Chick Lit

Although the 2011 decline in sales appeared to signal the death of chick lit, the statistics should be viewed in the light of a changing market for books. Figures from The Booksellers Association suggest that the UK market for adult fiction books (print) fell from a value of £476m in 2010 to £321m in 2014 (The Booksellers Association, 2015); however, there is evidence that fiction readers are migrating from print to ebooks. In 2009, ebooks contributed just 1% of the value of total fiction book sales, but this contribution had risen to 33% in 2013 (Mintel, 2014). If, as has been suggested, ebooks account for a disproportionate number of sales of women's fiction (Moyes, 2011), this shift in the market could account for at least part of the drop in sales of chick lit observed in 2011.

Female consumers still represent the largest segment in the UK book market. Data from Mintel (2020) suggests that 35% of women purchased a fiction paperback book in the 12 months leading to July 2020, compared to just 27% of men. Similarly, women form the biggest segment in the ebook market, with 21% of women purchasing a fiction ebook in the 12 months leading to July 2020, compared to 17% of men (Mintel, 2020). Thus, despite its apparent demise, there is still a significant potential audience for chick lit in both print and ebook formats.

Although the stereotypical pink chick lit covers appear to be less prevalent in bookstores now than in the first decade of the twenty-first century, Latham (2012) suggests that the genre is not dead, it is simply undergoing a change in terminology. She argues that the same types of novels are now classified more generically as "women's commercial fiction" or "contemporary romance". In addition, she argues that the target demographic for chick lit has grown. As both the readers and the authors of the original chick lit novels have aged, many have graduated from chick lit to hen lit, and now write about older women getting a second chance at both love and life. Although these novels may have changed their cover art, they are essentially chick lit novels, written by women who are still frequently referred to as chick lit authors (Latham, 2012). Other chick lit authors have moved in the opposite direction, and now publish their work as young adult fiction, where they deal with the same themes (finding a boyfriend whilst negotiating a range of trials and tribulations) but with younger heroines.

Latham also suggests that some authors have taken chick lit themes and transposed them into other popular genres including paranormal, dystopian and historical fictions (Latham, 2012).

Thus, while the stereotypical chick lit novel with a pink cover, featuring a twenty- or thirty-something-year-old woman working in the media and looking for love, might be in decline, the genre has expanded and developed into a much broader category. Chick lit now chronicles the lives of women of varying ages, races and nationalities (Smith, 2008), and deals with a broad range of issues. Whether it is termed 'chick lit' or 'women's commercial fiction', it is essentially popular fiction written by women for women, dealing with the complexities of modern women's lives (Prospero, 2012).

## 4.11 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the development and characteristics of chick lit as a literary genre. It has established that chick lit is a form of contemporary romantic fiction, often with humorous themes, which is written largely by women and for women. Conspicuous consumption of branded fashion items, is a central theme of many chick lit novels, often linked to the identity and lifestyle of the novels' characters. The next chapter develops this idea further, focussing on characterisation in novels, with a particular focus on the role of clothing and brands in character construction.

# Chapter 5: Characterisation in Novels

## 5.1 Introduction

This study aims to critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in chick lit novels. In order to explore this relationship, it is important to understand how characters are constructed by the author within a novel and how readers form their own impression of the character. This chapter therefore focuses on characterisation in novels. It begins by examining characterisation in the context of the novel, before proceeding to review different approaches to character analysis and the ways in which characters are constructed both within the text and in the mind of the reader. Finally, the relationship between characters, clothing and brands is considered.

## 5.2 Definitions

The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'characterisation' as "*the creation or construction of a fictional character"* (Oxford University Press, 2016a).

The word 'character' has its origins in the Greek '*charaktier'*, a stamping tool, and refers figuratively to a stamp or mark of personality unique to an individual (Eder et al., 2010); however the word is ambiguous – amongst its several usages, it may be used to refer to the qualities, or characteristics, that combine to form a person's personality, or it may be used to refer to the people who appear in the fictional worlds of books, plays, films, etc. (Culpeper, 2001).

Using the word in the latter sense, Eder et al. (2010, p. 10) define a character as:

> *"a recognisable fictional being, to which the ability to think and act is ascribed"*

## 5.3 Characterisation and the Novel

The notion of character in literature has a long history (Cuddon, 1991). Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE) was one of the first works to address literary theory. In it, he analyses the Greek tragedy – these were dramatic works, where the narrative was presented through a combination of the chorus and actors. Aristotle identifies character as one of the six components of tragedy, the others being plot, thought, diction, spectacle and song. In tragedy, he argues that character is subordinate to plot:

> *"For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse"* (S. H. Butler, 1902, pp. 26–27)

Conversely, novelist E.M. Forster (1927) argues that in a novel, happiness (or the reverse) is not always represented by action; instead, the author has access to the character's thoughts and feelings, which may or may not be reflected in their actions. Forster suggests that whilst Aristotle's views may be correct in terms of drama, they do not apply to the novel:

> *"In the drama all human happiness and misery does and must take the form of action. Otherwise its existence remains unknown, and this is the great difference between the drama and the novel."* (Forster, 1927, p. 84)

Harvey (1965) concurs with Forster, arguing that most novels exist to reveal and explore character, and suggesting that the Aristotelian emphasis on plot is therefore misplaced in relation to this literary form.

Historically, the notion of character was primarily associated with the stereotypical features of certain groups of individuals. For example, in *Rhetoric* (c. 322 BCE), Aristotle identifies various types of human character in relation to their emotions and moral qualities, arguing that these characters correspond to the individual's age and fortunes (Jebb, 1909b). Aristotle argued that an individual should act in a way that is true to type; he states that *"…a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way, by the rule either of necessity or of probability"* (S. H. Butler, 1902, p. 55). Thus, character type should determine both speech and actions.

Theophrastus, Aristotle's pupil, continued this interest in character types with his work *Characters* (c. 319 BCE). A collection of thirty character studies identifying the qualities and actions of different types of character (the flatterer, the complacent man, the arrogant man, etc.). Isaac Casaubon's Latin translation of Theophrastus work, published in 1592, followed by an English translation of Casaubon's Latin by John Healey in 1593, gave rise to a renewed interest in character studies in the seventeenth century (Cuddon, 1991; Jebb, 1909a), leading to the emergence of 'the character' as a new literary genre. Like Theophrastus' work, these seventeenth century character studies were short pen portraits of individuals who represented a particular 'type' of person.

The practice of creating Theophrastus-style character sketches (or 'charactery') was continued into the eighteenth century in periodical essays, printed in publications such as the *Tatler* or the *Spectator*. Authors such as Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison and Oliver Goldsmith took charactery one stage further in these essays by giving their characters names. Thus, whilst the essay characters still represented character 'types', they were also individuals (Cuddon, 1991). Cuddon suggests that these essay characters "*gave place to and made possible the character of the novel*" (Cuddon, 1991, p. 137). Others point to different origins. Some commentators (e.g. Cascardi, 2008) suggest that Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605), represents the first real novel. As well as using literary techniques such

as realism and intertextuality, Cervante examines the motivations, actions and emotions of his main character in a way that had not been attempted before, giving Don Quixote a psychological complexity which made him seem more like a real person, and less like a stereotypical character 'type' (Canton et al., 2016).

Regardless of the origin of the novelistic character, there is general consensus that explorations of personality and character were key to early novels. Watt (1957), Lynch (1998) and Griswold (2002) all trace the rise of the novel through the eighteenth Century. Watt (1957) argues that one of the defining features of the early novel, which distinguished it from other genres and previous forms of fiction, was the attention paid to the individualisation of its characters. Griswold (2002 p. 743) concurs, stating that a "*confluence of interest in the human personality, audience, and economic institutions gave rise to a genre that was easy to read, long, written in prose, fictitious, devoted to subjects of interest to middle-class women and to an analysis of character through detailed description of behaviour*". Lynch takes a slightly different view. She contends that the focus of characterisation in early eighteenth-century novels was not about individualities or inner lives, it was about the systems of exchange which underpin a commercial society. She links the characters in these early novels to the Theophrastus-influenced characteristic writing, with a focus on observation and external characterisation (Lynch, 1998). She argues that it was only in the latter part of the eighteenth century, that the cultural construction of the novel, with its focus on individual character, was finally accomplished. (Lynch, 1998). This coincided with the development of the novel of manners, which detailed the customs, values, and mores of a society, and the influence of these societal pressures upon the personal and public lives of the characters. These novels consolidated issues of internal and external characterisation by balancing the characters' interests in both their private and social life, thus leading to fuller, more complete, characterisation (Lynch, 1998; Watt, 1957). According to Lynch, it was these late eighteenth century characters who first succeeded in prompting readers to conceive of them as beings with lives of their own, so that characters began to become people with whom the readers could empathise (Lynch, 1998).

## 5.4 Functions of Characters in Novels

In novels, characters are primarily used for narrative purposes – they help to tell the story. They act as communication devices as they represent particular meanings within the narrative, such as human properties, virtues or vices; abstract ideas; social group membership; roles; archetypes or references to real people. They can be used to indirectly express ideas which might be difficult to address directly, such as taboos or supressed thoughts. Thus, characters help to condense complex contexts and make them tangible for the reader. They may also be used to establish inter and trans-textual relations in related novels (Eder et al., 2010).

However, characters also have a psychological effect on the reader. They elicit identification, sympathy and empathy as well as stimulating processes of creativity and contributing to the arousal of emotions (Eder et al., 2010). The characters in a novel help to evoke impressions of realism; they establish connections to the day-to-day life of the reader (Eder et al., 2010). Familiarity with the situation of a character increases reader involvement and transportation into the narrative (Oatley & Mar, 2005). Thus readers may identify with particular characters and, as they imagine themselves in a similar situation, the reader may come to like the character, and possibly begin to model their own real-life behaviours on those of the character (Oatley & Mar, 2005).

## 5.5 Character Analysis

### 5.5.1 The ontology of character

Whilst characters are a key component of most literary works, the study of characterisation has received little attention in literary theory (Culpeper, 1996, 2001; Frow, 1986; Harvey, 1965; Rorty, 1975). Frow (1986) suggests two key reasons for this: firstly the concept of character is not specific to literary theory, but instead is heavily dependent on cultural schemata regarding the nature of the self; and secondly there are conflicting views of the ontology of character, with one set of theorists, (structuralists and semioticians) viewing character as merely a combination of words (Heidbrink, 2010), whilst others (humanists) view characters as analogous to real people (Bamman et al., 2014). This latter issue, regarding the ontology of characters, is a key area of contention in literary theory.

E.M. Forster discussed characterisation in a series of lectures given at Trinity College Cambridge in spring 1927 (later collected and published in the book *Aspects of the Novel*). He argued that whilst characters might appear real, and thus to have lives of their own, they are not – they merely parallel some aspects of real people. He sums up the character as follows:

> *"He is generally born off, he is capable of dying on, he wants little food or sleep, he is tirelessly occupied with human relationships. And—most important—we can know more about him than we can know about any of our fellow creatures, because his creator and narrator are one."* (Forster, 1927, p. 56)

Forster pays significant attention to this latter point – as the novelist is the creator and narrator of the character, (s)he is able to inform the reader not only about the speech and actions of the character, but also his inner thoughts and feelings – giving the reader more insight into the character than we can ever have about real people:

> *"The speciality of the novel is that the writer can talk about his characters as well as through them or can arrange for us to listen when they talk to themselves. He has access to self-communings, and from that level he can descend even deeper and peer into the subconscious."* (Forster, 1927, p. 84)

### 5.5.2 Approaches to analysing character

As there is no consensus amongst literary theorists about the ontology of character, similarly, there is little agreement about how character can be investigated and analysed. Eder et al. (2010) suggest that there are four paradigms of character analysis. Firstly, the Hermeneutic approach, which views characters as representations of human beings, thus analysts consider the characters' historical and cultural background as well as that of their creators. Secondly, the Psychoanalytic approach, which explores the inner-life, or psyche, of both the character and the reader through psycho-dynamic models of personality. Thirdly the Structural and Semiotic approaches, where characters are viewed as a set of signifiers and textural structures, rather than representations of real people, focussing on the role of the text in character construction. Finally, the Cognitive approach, which views characters as text-based constructs of the human mind, and therefore uses models of understanding text and models of the human psyche to analyse the character.

In a similar vein, Culpeper (2001) suggests that there are three possible approaches to analysing characters: the humanising approach, where scholars view characters as imitations or representations of real people; the de-humanising approach, where characters are seen to have a purely textual existence - they simply perform a function within the narrative, but have no human characteristics or motivations; and finally a mixed approach whereby it is accepted that both textual and psychological levels of description can be used to provide an insight into character. Culpeper favours the mixed approach, arguing that whilst fictional characters are not real, and are only impressions created by the reader's interpretation of the text; most readers think of characters in terms applicable to real people, and thus attempt to interpret characters with the same structures and processes that they use to interpret real-life experiences of people.

## 5.6 Character Types

Forster (1927) suggested that literary characters fall into two categories: flat and round. Flat characters are based on character types and may be thought of as caricatures. Examples of character types would be the evil boss or the femme fatale. Some character types frequently occur as part of larger constellations, so they are related to one another (e.g. the chick lit heroine and the gay best friend) (Eder et al., 2010). Flat characters are often comic, adding humour to the novel. Truly flat characters are constructed round a single idea or quality, and their nature can be summed up in a single sentence; whereas round characters are more complex (Forster, 1927). Forster suggests that the test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising the reader in a convincing way. Both types of character have a place within a novel: "*a novel that is at all complex often requires flat people as well as round*" (Forster, 1927, p. 71). J. Wood (2008) concurs, arguing that "*There is no such thing*

*as 'a novelistic character'. There are just thousands of different kinds of people, some round, some flat, some deep, some caricatures, some realistically evoked, some brushed in with the lightest of strokes.*"

Eder et al. (2010) distinguish between two classes of character types: archetypes and stereotypes. Archetypes are frequently occurring character-types with similar traits, whose appearance transcends historical and cultural boundaries (e.g. the innocent, the hero or the rebel); whereas stereotypes are widely held, oversimplified and clichéd views of particular groups within society (e.g. gender stereotypes or national stereotypes). Fictional characters are part of an overall media culture, and therefore tend to reflect and absorb current social stereotypes of gender, race, class, etc.; however, the author may modify some elements of these stereotypes for originality. The revised fictional representations are then fed back into society. Thus, fictional characters contribute to the modification and distribution of cultural stereotypes (Eder et al., 2010).

## 5.7 Constructing Characters in the Text

The production and reception of characters is heavily dependent on genre. Genres combine typical plot elements and settings with typical types of character and may be thought of as a mental schema in the mind of both the author and reader. The appearance of one typical element of a genre will trigger expectations in terms of themes within the narrative, types of characters, the situations they will encounter and their relationships with other characters (Eder et al., 2010).

Traditionally, characterisation was considered to relate mainly to the attribution of psychological or social traits to a character (Eder et al., 2010), however a wide variety of properties may be attributed to a character in the text. At its broadest definition, characterisation is now considered to relate to all information associated with a character (Eder et al., 2010); this may include information about the time and place in which the character is located; the character's outer appearance, thoughts, feelings, circumstances, possessions and social relationships; and all of the actions and events associated with the character. Thus, Eder et al. define characterisation as:

> *"the process of connecting information with a figure in the text so as to provide a character in the fictional world with a certain property or properties, concerning body, mind, behaviour or relations to the (social) environment."* (Eder et al., 2010, p. 32)

According to Eder et al. (2010) there are three areas to the general structure of characters:

i. Corporeality – physical appearance
ii. Psyche – inner state
iii. Sociality – social roles, relationships and interactions with others

Literary scholarship differentiates between direct and indirect modes of characterisation. Direct characterisation occurs where the character's traits are explicitly named and identified in the text of

the narrative. Indirect characterisation occurs where the character's traits need to be inferred by the reader on the basis of the words, opinions and actions of the character, or through reference to historical or cultural real-world conventions (Eder et al., 2010). Eder et al (2010) suggest that in reality, these are not two discrete modes of characterisation, but rather the opposing ends of a continuum.

### 5.7.1 Readers' Construction of Characters

Readers construct and create characters in their own mind from the information given in the text of the novel, thus characters are co-creations of the author and the reader (Keen, 2011). At a base level, characters exist as merely a collection of words, or signs, within the text. A proper name acts as a cohesion device, helping the reader to group a collection of signs together, such that an impression of a human-like character emerges from the grouping (Barthes, 1990; Heidbrink, 2010).

Information about the character may be provided by the character herself (self-characterisation) or by agencies other than the character, e.g. the narrator or other characters in the story (altero-characterisation) (Eder et al., 2010). Readers build up mental models of characters from the text based on how the character behaves, what they say about themselves and what others say about them (Oatley & Mar, 2005). Not all of the information provided may be 'true' – readers need to determine the reliability of the narrator or the speaker, and identify statements which reflect the value system of the speaker, rather than the fictional reality (Eder et al., 2010).

Essentially, characters are fictional people, so, when trying to understand characters, readers often resort to their understanding of real people in order to make sense of the character (Eder et al., 2010); however it is important to remember that characters are not actually real. Characters are incomplete beings. Real people have a range of properties, but if the text provides no information about a certain property (e.g. sex, height, weight, race, hair colour), then this property is lacking in the character, and the reader has to fill this gap using their own imagination (Eder et al., 2010). It has been noted that readers' reported senses of character are often much richer than the information provided in the text (Stockwell & Mahlberg, 2015). Where there is missing information, each reader may fill the gap differently, leading to different perceptions of the character (Keen, 2011).

Constitution of characters by readers is based on schemata built up from perceived connections that exist between two or more pieces of information (Culpeper, 2001; Eder et al., 2010). Thus, if the reader is given one piece of information, she can fill in the other part, based on her existing knowledge. For example, if a character carries a Chanel handbag, the reader may assume that the character is affluent and/or status conscious. Therefore, textual clues, or signs, activate inferences based on the reader's existing knowledge and understanding. Hence, the concept of characterisation is dependent on schemata used to define the self (Frow, 1986) as well as social schemata (Culpeper, 2001; Montoro,

2007). Construction of character schemata depends on both the reader's knowledge of the actual world (particularly the social world), and her media knowledge (narrative knowledge about fictional worlds and character typologies) (Culpeper, 2001; Eder et al., 2010; Montoro, 2007). The table below summarises relevant aspects of these two types of knowledge:

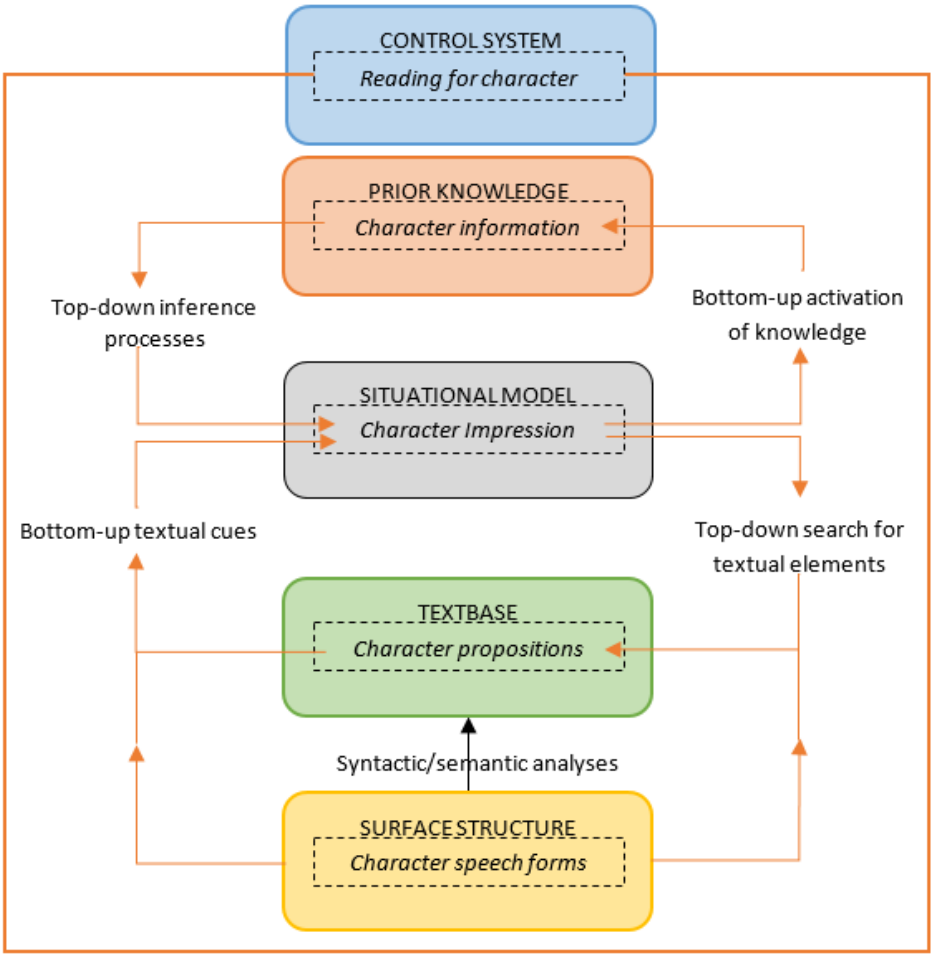
**Table 5.1** *Aspects of Knowledge Used in Character Construction (Adapted from Eder et al, 2010)*

| Social Knowledge | Media Knowledge |
|---|---|
| • Personal schema of human nature<br>• Knowledge of social categories<br>• Knowledge of prototypes & stereotypes<br>• Knowledge of groups and roles<br>• Knowledge of folk psychology and sociology<br>• Dynamics of social cognition<br>• Attribution and interpretation of behaviour<br>• Self-image of the reader | • Awareness of the text's communication processes & fictionality<br>• Knowledge of genres<br>• Knowledge of modes of narrative<br>• Knowledge of character types<br>• Knowledge of dramaturgical functions<br>• Knowledge of aesthetic conventions<br>• Star images<br>• Knowledge of contexts of production<br>• Understanding of intertextual references<br>• Knowledge of individual popular characters |

Culpeper (2001) proposes the model in Figure 5.1 to represent how an impression of character might be constructed in the mind during the process of reading. Each solid box in the model represents an element of the text comprehension process, whilst the dotted boxes within each of these suggest a part of that element which is specific to characterisation. The arrows represent the linkages between the elements. Key to this model is the implication that comprehension of character is a combination of both bottom-up processes (determined by textual elements) and top-down processes (determined by knowledge in memory). It also shows that comprehension is cyclic – "*what you see influences what you know, and what you know influences what you see"* (Culpeper, 2001, p. 36)

Therefore, readers' construction of character is dependent not only on cues in the text, but also on the reader's wider knowledge and understanding. In addition, the reader adds to her wider knowledge and understanding through her reading of the text.

**Figure 5.1** *Comprehending Character (Culpeper, 2001¸ p. 35)*




Montoro (2007) argues that the success of chick lit is, in part, due to the way that the female characters in chick lit novels are designed to be realistic, drawing from established social schemata so that readers can recognise, sympathise and empathise with the characters. Based on an analysis of five novels, she suggests that the female characters in chick lit are all very similar: white, British, middle-class, in their late 20s or early 30s, professional, single (but looking for a relationship), scatter-brained, needy and overly obsessed with their appearance (weight, clothing, etc.). Because of the lack of distinctiveness in the portrayal of the characters, she claims that readers' impression formation is rarely based on bottom-up processes (determined by textual cues), but rather relies on top-down processes (determined by knowledge of the stereotypical chick lit character-type in memory) (Montoro, 2007). This supports Dorney's view that in contemporary chick lit, products (as textual cues) do not flesh out the character; instead they simply enable readers to make sense of the character – to recognise and classify the character type (Dorney, 2004).

## 5.8 The Relationship between Characters and Things

Burgess (2019 p.16) states that "*without character it was once accepted that there could be no fiction",* however he goes on to suggest that in late twentieth century fiction 'things' began to become as much the focus of the novel as characters.

Harvey (1965) suggests that describing characters' relationships with 'things' is one of the key ways in which authors make their characters life-like. He quotes Madame Merle from Henry James *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), who states:

> *"There's no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we're each of us made up of some cluster of appurtenances. What shall we call our 'self'? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us – and then it flows back again. I know that a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear. I've a great respect for things! One's self – for other people – is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads, the company one keeps – these things are all expressive."* (James, 1881, p. 226)

Thus, he argues that the function of descriptions of things in novels is to create settings which may be viewed as expressions of character (Harvey, 1965). Despite this, little attention has been paid to the role of 'things' in literary theory. As Bill Brown (2003, p. 17) contends, literary criticism "*has hardly begun to bring material culture into full view*".

### 5.8.1 The Relationship between Characters and Clothing

Clothing in novels is considered to be an important 'thing' which helps to express character, from Madame Merle's assertion that *"a large part of myself is in the clothes I choose to wear"* to Tom Woolf's view that "*Clothing is a wonderful doorway that most easily leads you to the heart of an individual*" (Woolf cited in Angelo, 1990), clothing is central to many representations of character.

McNeil et al. (2009, p. 6) argue that the "*complex interrelationship between clothes and character forms one of the key narrative devices in fiction*" offering the semiotics of clothing as a means of getting to 'know' people. Similarly, Newman (2017) argues that knowing what characters wear and how they feel about the clothes that they wear *"brings the reader closer to the author's narrative"* (Newman, 2017, p. 8); whilst Arana (2009) suggests that:

> *"Literary characterisation, like all artistic representation of the human figure, has to some extent always involved dressing the body while referencing the person's underlying nakedness as a foil to the costume"* (Arana, 2009, p. 250)

This concept is perhaps best illustrated by a well-known scene in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), which details Lily Bart's last evening before her death, when she unpacks and repacks her trunk of elegant designer dresses. Her identity in New York society is inextricably linked to these garments

and as she packs them away, she packs away her sense of self (Joslin, 2009). Without these dresses, Lily sees herself as "*rootless and ephemeral, mere spin-drift of the whirling surface of existence"* (Wharton, 1905, p. 515).

### 5.8.2 The Relationship between Characters and Brands

Although there seems to be a general acceptance that brand names are used in novels to indicate lifestyle and support characterisation (e.g. Bloom, 2008; Mullan, 2006) no previous study has investigated the relationship between characters in novels and the brands that they use.

Marketing theory suggests that people choose and use brands which reflect their personality and self-image (Dolich, 1969; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Phau & Lau, 2001; Sirgy, 1982), so it seems reasonable to assume that, where authors mention brand names in a novel, they have selected brands which reflect similarly on the character that they are creating. In the same way, when readers are constructing a character in their mind whilst reading, it is likely that they will draw on their knowledge of the brands as additional textual clues to the personality and lifestyle of the character.

In a discussion of the use of brands in James Bond movies, Cooper et al. (2010) argue that through observing characters' relationships with products in the films, consumers learn to attach social and contextual meaning to the brands. These descriptions of character behaviour and brand narratives provide consumers with identity and lifestyle ideals as they engage in the story. Consequently, consumers draw on these narratives when constructing their own social reality (Cooper et al., 2010). This reinforces the idea that consumers may add to their social knowledge and understanding through the use of brands in fictional settings.

Thus, the interaction between characters and brands in fiction may both draw upon, and add to, the reader's social knowledge.

## 5.9 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed how novelistic characters are constructed, both by the author and in the mind of the reader. In particular, it has considered the role of clothing and brands as textual cues in the construction of character. It has been suggested that chick lit characters are largely based on stereotypes, and therefore that products and brand names do not contribute to the construction of the character in the text, but rather enable the reader to recognise the character type (Dorney, 2004; Montoro, 2007). This assertion will be explored in the primary research.

The next chapter forms the final part of the literature review. It considers the use of brand names in novels as a form of product placement.

# Chapter 6: Product Placement

## 6.1 Introduction

Several authors refer to the practice of brand name usage in novels as a form of product placement (e.g. Dorney, 2004; Mullan, 2006; Ślósarz, 2018).

This chapter considers the use of brand names in novels from a product placement perspective. It begins with a review of the development and use of product placement as a promotional tool, before going on to consider novels as a product placement medium. Finally, it examines how the effectiveness of product placements in text may be measured.

## 6.2 Definitions

Global media research company, PQ Media, defines product placement as:

> *"[a] marketing tactic increasingly used by marketers as part of multimedia campaigns in which the objective is to place or integrate brand names, logos or specific products within the non-ad content of various media. The goal of advertisers utilizing product placement is to prominently place or creatively integrate brands or products into particular story lines or scenes to promote brand awareness, favorable brand attitudes and purchase intention"* (Quinn & Kivijarv, 2018, p. 22)

Historically, product placement has been a promotional tool associated primarily with the media of cinema and television, and many academic definitions of product placement reflect this association; for example, Balasubramanian (1994, p. 31) defines product placement as: "*a paid product message aimed at influencing movie (or television) audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie (or television program)"*. Similarly, Lehu (2007, p. 1) defines product placement as "*the integration of a product or brand into a film or televised series*", although he goes on to acknowledge that it is possible to find placements "*within other cultural vehicles, such as songs or novels*" (Lehu, 2007, p. 1).

Several definitions of product placement highlight its commercial nature. For example, Chin, Wilson, & Russo (2012) critically review a wide range of past definitions of product placement, and subsequently propose the following definition:

> *"the incorporation of product/brand placement in non-commercial contexts in a planned and unobtrusive approach for commercial purposes."* (Chin et al., 2012, p. 5)

Similarly, Karrh (1998) differentiates between those instances where products or brands are incorporated into media vehicles for a strategic purpose within the narrative (e.g. to add verisimilitude

or for stylistic reasons) and those where the brands appear as a result of a commercial arrangement, such as cash, barter or some other consideration in return for the appearance. He implies that it is only the latter (commercial) arrangements which are termed product placement (Karrh, 1998). As commercial arrangements are not always clearly disclosed, this appears to be a grey area in the literature, with many authors terming any product or brand appearance within a media vehicle as 'product placement' (e.g. Russell & Belch, 2005).

## 6.3 History & Development

Product placement is a well-established marketing tool. Several authors trace it back to the 1890s when Lever Brothers negotiated the appearance of Sunlight soap in an early Lumière Brothers' film (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Kozary & Baxter, 2010; Kreimeier, 2015). Product placements continued to appear in films throughout the early years of cinema (Hackley et al., 2008; Kozary & Baxter, 2010), and the growth in popularity of television in the 1950s offered another medium for product placement (Hudson & Hudson, 2006); however, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that paid product placement began to become a well-organised and high-growth area of marketing, with the establishment of dedicated product placement agencies (Balasubramanian, 1994; Hudson & Hudson, 2006).

Recent years have seen a surge in interest in product placement as a marketing communications tool (Balasubramanian et al., 2006, 2014). PQ Media report that global product placement revenues increased year-on-year by 14.5% to a total value of $20.57 billion in 2019 (Quinn & Kivijarv, 2020). However, it is important to note that cash revenues represent only part of the total market, with many placements taking the form of a barter arrangement, whereby the brand owner does not pay for the placement, but simply supplies the products to a production company for free in return for an appearance in a film or show (Balasubramanian, 1994; Hackley & Hackley, 2012; Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Gupta & Gould, 1997; Karrh, 1998). In fact in the USA, which is one of the most mature paid-for placement markets, it is estimated that the majority of brand appearances on TV are still unpaid (Hackley & Hackley, 2012).

Karrh (1998) suggests that there are three key reasons for the growing popularity of product placement. Firstly, he argues that the cultural vehicles used in product placement have a range of special characteristics which make them attractive media for promotional messages, including long shelf-life, global reach and the ability to promote products within an impressive environment; secondly, they have strong persuasive power; and finally, they offer the opportunity for implied celebrity (or character) endorsement.

Another reason suggested for the growth in product placement is the changing marketing environment, where consumers are showing an increasing dislike for traditional, overt advertising, through passive and active avoidance (e.g. using DVR technology to fast-forward through advertising breaks on TV) (Guennemann & Cho, 2014). Product placement is a form of covert marketing as sponsors are not always clearly identified and consumers may be unaware of its persuasive effects (Karniouchina et al., 2011).

Modern product placement is often an integral part of an integrated marketing communications campaign, combining with other promotional tools such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion and celebrity endorsement, to ensure maximum effectiveness (Russell & Belch, 2005). Brand owners are also working closely with media producers and becoming involved in the creative development of sponsored entertainment vehicles (Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Tiwsakul & Hackley, 2005).

## 6.4 Novels as a commercial product placement medium

As previously established, brand names are frequently mentioned in novels, but they seem to be used mainly as a communication device by authors, adding verisimilitude and detail to the descriptions of the characters and settings, rather than their use being attributable to a commercial arrangement between the author and the brand owner. Nevertheless, Ślósarz (2018) argues that:

> *"Product placement provides authors with reliable income and other benefits. At the same time, goods advertised in books gain prestige."* (Ślósarz, 2018, p. 197)

Novels have been identified as having a number of positive characteristics as a potential product placement medium. Product placement in fiction has the potential to draw on both advertising and narrative strategies, two mutually reinforcing types of persuasion that promote consumer desire (Bullen, 2009). Placements can be precisely targeted in different genres of fiction, brand names can be repeated several times throughout the work and readers can pause over the brand name when and how they please (Lehu, 2007); and reading is a solitary act, requiring focus, which means that consumers are less likely to get distracted and miss the brand names in the narrative (Mucundorfeanu & Szambolics, 2017).

As brand names are a common feature in contemporary fiction, paid product placement in novels is a covert form of advertising – when done well, readers are unlikely to be able to distinguish paid placements from brand names that are being used to set the scene or support characterisation. For this reason, some commentators have expressed concern about the use of product placement in this medium (Bullen, 2009; Friedman, 1991; Mucundorfeanu & Szambolics, 2017). There is no legislation in the UK, EU or US governing product placement in novels and therefore there is no requirement for

authors, publishers or brand owners to disclose paid placements to readers. Even where disclosures are made, research suggests that consumers may fail to make a connection between their exposure to product placement in the story and their preference for a placed product (Storm & Stoller, 2014).

Unfortunately, many commentators refer to any use of brand names in novels (whether paid or not) as 'product placement' (e.g. Bullen, 2009; N. R. Johnson, 2010; Mucundorfeanu & Szambolics, 2017; Ślósarz, 2018), which makes it difficult to ascertain the true extent of paid product placement in this medium. When paid placements are disclosed, they often generate significant controversy (R. A. Nelson, 2004; Ślósarz, 2018). It has been suggested that much of this controversy stems from the view that a literary work is a form of art, a "*sacred space*" where commercial notions, such as product placement, have no place (Lehu, 2007, p. 169). Nevertheless, there are signs that paid-for product placement in novels may be increasing.

### 6.4.1 Examples of paid product placement in novels

Perhaps the best known example of paid product placement in a novel is that of Fay Weldon's 2001 novel *The Bulgari Connection* (Kirkpatrick, 2001; Lehu, 2007; R. A. Nelson, 2004). Weldon publicly acknowledged receiving a fee from Bulgari for including references to its jewellery products in her book. In fact, the book was originally commissioned by Bulgari, with the intention of the brand privately publishing a limited run of 750 copies to be given away free at an event to celebrate the opening of Bulgari's Sloane Street store in London (R. A. Nelson, 2004). In return for the undisclosed fee, Weldon was required to mention the brand 12 times within the book, however she decided to make Bulgari a central element of the story and include it in the title. When the book was completed, Weldon thought that it was good enough for a standard publishing contract, and the book was subsequently published by HarperCollins in the UK and Grove/Atlantic in the US (Grady, 2019; Reid, 2001).

Nelson (2004) analysed the controversy surrounding the publication of the *Bulgari Connection*. He found that a key concern for many commentators was that readers might not be aware that Weldon was paid to incorporate Bulgari's brand into the novel. Other writers, consumer groups and journalists argued that her actions damaged the credibility of all books and the integrity of all authors; however, Nelson argues that product placement in novels has a long history and therefore Weldon's novel is not particularly unusual other than the fact that she, the publishers and the sponsor were all very open about the arrangement. He reports that Bulgari were very pleased with the results of the sponsorship, as it generated a great deal of press coverage, and that the company viewed product placement as a key element of its communication strategy.

Following the success of Weldon's sponsored product placement, 'Chick-lit' author Carole Matthews received a fee to include the Ford Fiesta in her 2004 novel *The Sweetest Taboo* (Lehu, 2007; Petrecca, 2006). Ford chose to partner with Matthews in order to bring its Fiesta model to the attention of young women (Hakim, 2004). A spokesperson for Ford was quoted as saying:

> *"The age group we're targeting is 28- to 35-year-olds, women just getting on the career ladder who want something a bit stylish…we needed to make them aware that Fiesta is around and if you're a sassy young woman, it's a car you might consider buying."* (Chatterton quoted in Hakim, 2004)

Like *The Bulgari Connection*, the acknowledged product placement garnered significant media attention, something which Hakim (2004) suggests helped the author to publicise her work.

More recently, in 2014, critically acclaimed author Anna Funder was commissioned to write a short story by Paspaley, an Australian luxury pearl brand. The story, *Everything Precious,* was used as part of a multi-media promotional campaign by the brand to engage a younger, more fashion conscious audience (Heyde, 2014). Subscribers signed up on the brand's website to receive the story by email in seven daily instalments; following this it was made available in hard copy, ebook and audio book formats. Interestingly, there are no references made to either pearls or Paspaley in the narrative (Anon, 2015); instead, the product placement took the form of a series of photographs inserted in the book, featuring an actress wearing pearls in a young, fashionable context. The campaign generated over $1.2m dollars in coverage, generated over 12m views, downloads, reads and shares and resulted in the highest ever sales in Paspaley's history, with over 50% of sales coming from buyers new to the category (Special Group, 2014).

Books aimed at children and teenagers are not exempt from paid product placement. Rich (2008) reports that product placement was a planned element of the *Mackenzie Blue* series, aimed at 8- to 12-year-old girls. Tina Wells, former chief executive of Buzz Marketing Group, which advises companies on how to sell to the youth market, is the author of the books in the series which are filled with references to brands. It is alleged that she offered sponsorship opportunities to the brands in the stories. Similarly, N.R. Johnson (2010, p. 56) suggests that Alloy Entertainment, publisher of the pre-teen and teen Clique, Gossip Girl and A-List novels, "*actively recruited advertisers and weaved product names into the narratives*". Alloy has categorically denied this (Winerip, 2008); however, in a discussion regarding purported plagiarism by one of Alloy's authors, Kaavya Viswanathan (author of *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life* (2006)), Smydra (2007) states:

> *"Besides writing the book, Viswanathan encountered the additional pressure of weaving in product references, which are elements Alloy required for marketability purposes. As a result of Alloy's contractual terms, Viswanathan's book includes the mention of a few name brands: Manolo Blahnik, Habitual Jeans, and La Perle bras.*

> *Even though the details surrounding the contract terms are not known, most likely Alloy negotiated the addition of these products into the manuscript*." (Smydra, 2007, p. 45)

Other examples of paid product placement in novels aimed at teenagers, include Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman's *Cathy's Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233* (2006), in which the authors included references to Cover Girl make-up products in return for Procter & Gamble promoting the book on its teen website www.beinggirl.com (Rich, 2008); and Meg Cabot's *How to be Popular* (2006), which includes paid references to Clinique products (Grady, 2019).

### 6.4.2 Interactive product placements in novels

The advent of ebooks and social media has opened up a range of new possibilities for sponsored product placement in novels. Hilary Carlip's 'click lit' novel, *Find Me I'm Yours* (2014) contains several mentions of artificial sweetener Sweet 'N' Low. According to Alter (2014), the owners of Sweet 'N' Low paid around $1.3m to be featured in the story. The ebook allows readers to click on embedded links within the text leading to interactive content including videos, mini-websites and opportunities to share their own content via social media (Amazon.co.uk, 2014). Alter (2014) argued that "*if it succeeds, it could usher in a new business model for publishers, one that blurs the lines between art and commerce in ways that are routine in TV shows and movies but rare in books*".

Similarly, William Boyd's short story *The Vanishing Game* (2014) was commissioned by Land Rover, for a reported "*low six-figure sum*" (Flood, 2014). Land Rover features heavily in the plot of the story, with the protagonist travelling from London to Scotland in an old Land Rover Defender. The story is available as a free ebook from Amazon and Apple and was also offered as an interactive reading experience on Tumblr. The interactive version included images and video from Land Rover, which appeared when readers scrolled over particular words or passages (Flood, 2014). The ability to link interactive content to sponsored brand placement in novels, may make it a much more attractive proposition for advertisers.

The most recent example of interactive product placement in novels is Shopfiction™, developed by author Riley Costello. In her first novel, *Waiting at Hayden's* (2018), readers can click on the description of the character's outfit in the ebook, or use the web addresses at the end of each chapter in the printed version, which takes them to Costello's website (www.sincerelyriley.com), where they will find an image of the outfit, modelled by an actor in the setting described in the story. Next to the image are "shop the look" affiliate links to the brands' online stores where the items can be purchased. In addition, at the end of the seven chapters, there are links to video clips where the reader can watch key scenes acted out. Beneath each video clip there is a lookbook with photos of the characters in each outfit seen in the video and more links to shop the looks (Costello, 2018). This method of

monetisation of the novel stems from Costello's experience as a fashion blogger. In an interview with Vox, she is quoted as saying "*Right now, fashion and fiction are really merging…A person who likes to shop will be interested in reading my kind of women's fiction*." (Costello, quoted in Grady, 2019).

### 6.4.3 Reverse product placements

Sometimes authors invent their own fictional brands, rather than using real brand names in their narratives and these too may offer commercial potential. Muzellec, Lynn, & Lambkin (2012) suggest that brands initiated in the virtual world of books, games and films, etc. often possess strong consumer-based brand equity. Their value can be leveraged through reverse product placement and the launch of the physical embodiment of the fictional brand in the real world.

Examples of reverse product placement from novels include Nestle's Wonka bars, based on the Wonka brand which features in Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*; and Jelly Belly's 'Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans', based on the sweets featured in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books (S. Brown, 2002). There are also examples of reverse product placement in fashion, for example the 2013 launch of Capitol Couture, a high fashion collection designed by *Catching Fire* costume designer Trish Summerville. The collection of clothes and accessories were drawn from Summerville's designs for Catching Fire – a film based on the second of Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games books (Reuters, 2013). Similarly, in 2014, Tesco's F&F clothing range launched a collection of lingerie based on the popular erotic novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Cliff, 2014).

Mucundorfeanu & Szambolics (2017) suggest that reverse product placement represents a potentially lucrative opportunity for manufacturers and retailers (particularly where novels lead to successful TV series or movies) because the story, and implicitly the product, already has millions of fans who do not need a great deal of persuasion to buy it.

### 6.4.4 Are novels a viable commercial product placement medium?

Despite the previous examples, paid product placements in novels appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Most brand name mentions in novels are unpaid. Lehu (2007) suggests that this may be more about authors' lack of business acumen, rather than a lack of interest from brands.

However, based on a qualitative analysis of 34 novels, Ślósarz (2018) argues that product placement in novels is highly effective, stating that:

> *"Due to the workings of peripheral reception, the make or brand as an integral part of the plot effectively reaches the reader's subconscious mind. As a result of indirect persuasion, products come to be permanently and reliably associated with sophistication, style, adventure, and/or good taste."* (Ślósarz, 2018, p. 213)

She provides no evidence to support this assertion, but goes on to argue that, through taking advantage of readers' emotional connection with characters in a novel, product placement focuses readers' attention on specific brands inspiring desire for those brands (Ślósarz, 2018).

Nevertheless, Grady (2019) argues that although novels have repeatedly been suggested as a potential new product placement medium, their reach is so limited that they do not represent a viable commercial proposition for brands.

## 6.5 Consumer Attitudes to Product Placement

Product placement is a form of covert marketing (Karniouchina et al., 2011), and ethical concerns are often highlighted when placements are discussed. Nevertheless, most research suggests that consumers are generally positive towards the use of product placement as a marketing tool.

Some of the earliest work in this area was undertaken by Nebenzahl & Secunda (1993) who investigated consumers' attitudes towards product placements in movies. They found that most consumers do not object to product placements, and actually prefer them to alternative forms of on-screen promotion. Those consumers who objected did so on ethical grounds. Their findings were mirrored by Gupta & Gould (1997) whose survey of college students also found generally favourable attitudes towards product placement in movies; but that placements for ethically-charged products, such as alcohol, cigarettes and guns, were perceived as being less acceptable than placements for other products.

Although attitudes towards product placement in general appear to be positive, a variety of researchers have noted differences in attitudes towards product placement relating to individual differences such as gender (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Gupta & Gould, 1997), ethnicity (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; M. R. Nelson & McLeod, 2005), age (Delorme & Reid, 1999; Schmoll et al., 2006) brand consciousness (M. R. Nelson & McLeod, 2005) and media habits (Gupta & Gould, 1997; Schmoll et al., 2006).

As with most product placement research, there has been a focus on attitudinal research towards placements in movies (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009). Notable exceptions include Tiwsakul & Hackley (2005) who studied attitudes towards product placement in British TV shows and de Gregorio & Sung (2009) who studied attitudes towards product placement in popular songs, both using a methodology adapted from Gupta & Gould (1997).

Tiwsakul & Hackley's findings were similar to those focused on placements in movies. They found that attitudes towards product placement in British TV shows were broadly positive, but that consumers felt that issues relating to ethically-charged products are more prominent in product placement than

they are in conventional advertising. Respondents also expressed some concerns about the subliminal nature of product placements, and the possibility of product placement being used to promote products that manufacturers would not normally be allowed to advertise in the UK (eg: cigarettes) (Tiwsakul & Hackley, 2005).

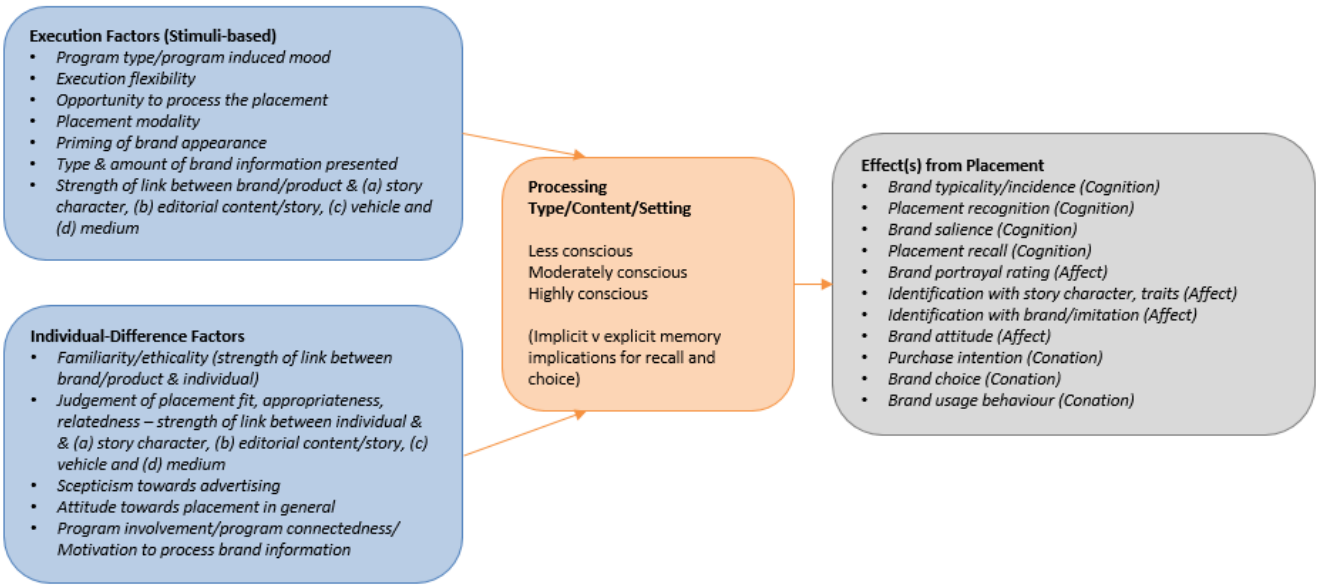
In relation to product placement in popular songs, De Gregorio and Sung found that consumers perceived placements in songs less positively than those in movies, but not negatively overall. Respondents appeared to be less concerned about the use of alcohol, tobacco and weapon brands in songs than in movies. (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009).

To date, there has been no detailed investigation of consumer attitudes towards product placement in novels. Given the controversy and press coverage surrounding acknowledged paid-for placements in novels (R. A. Nelson, 2004; Ślósarz, 2018), this is an area that warrants attention.

## 6.6 Measuring the Effectiveness of Product Placement

Both practitioner and academic interest in product placement has increased significantly in recent years (Russell & Belch, 2005). In 2006, Balasubramanian et al. produced a landmark paper which presented an integrated conceptual model of how product placement works, offering a research agenda for future work in the area. The model comprises four components: execution/stimulus factors, individual-specific factors, processing depth and message outcomes. The outcomes are based around the hierarchy of effects model, and are therefore split into three areas: cognition (i.e. memory based effects, such as recall and recognition), affect (i.e. attitudes) and conation (i.e. purchase intent and behaviour) (Balasubramanian et al., 2006). Subsequent research has investigated various dimensions of the model in a variety of contexts.

**Figure 6.1** *Integrative Framework of Product Placement (Balasubramanian et al., 2006, p. 117)*




Brand awareness and brand attitude are considered to be the two universal marketing communications objectives (Rossiter et al., 2018), therefore the effectiveness of product placement is often measured with reference to these two constructs (identified as cognitive and affective effects respectively in Balasubramanian et al.'s model).

### 6.6.1 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is defined as "*the buyer's ability to identify […] the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase*" (Rossiter et al., 2018). There are two types of brand awareness: brand recognition, where the buyer is able to recognise the brand when seeing or hearing the brand name (or able to recognise the brand when exposed to other stimuli, such as the packaging or logo); and brand recall, where the buyer is able to recall the brand name when given a cue (such as "when you think of jeans, which brands come immediately to mind?") (Rossiter, 2014; Rossiter et al., 2018).

The effectiveness of product placement in relation to recall and recognition is confirmed in several previous studies (e.g. Davtyan, Stewart, & Cunningham, 2016; Grzyb, Dolinski, & Kozlowska, 2018; Srivastava, 2015; Uribe, 2016); however Russell (2019) cautions that recall of a placement does not necessarily mean that the placement is persuasive.

### 6.6.2 Brand Attitude

Brand attitude is defined as "*an individual's overall evaluation of the brand*" (Liu et al., 2012). It can be measured by asking buyers the extent to which they like or dislike a particular brand (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007).

It is suggested that product placement works on the basis of the 'mere exposure' effect (Cowley & Barron, 2008; Ruggieri & Boca, 2013). The mere exposure theory proposes that repeated exposure to an object results in an enhanced attitude towards it (Zajonc, 1968), thus consumers simply need to be exposed to a product or brand to begin to develop a positive attitude towards it. The consumer does not need to be able to recognise or recall the exposure to produce an effect on attitudes (Scott & White, 2016), thus even if product placement does not appear to have an impact on brand awareness, it may still have an impact on brand attitude.

However, research relating to the effectiveness of product placement in terms of attitude change is inconclusive. A number of situational and individual variables have been found to moderate the impact of placements on brand attitude including placement prominence (Chan et al., 2016; Cowley & Barron, 2008; Fong et al., 2016), attitudes towards the media vehicle (Cowley & Barron, 2008), narrative enjoyment (Gillespie & Joireman, 2016) and brand familiarity (Verhellen et al., 2016).

## 6.6 Previous Research Regarding Product Placements in Text

Most research related to product placement focuses on films and TV (e.g. Davtyan & Cunningham, 2017; Dias et al., 2017; Gould et al., 2000; Wiles & Danielova, 2009); however, recent studies have begun to look at placements in a broader range of media, including songs (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009; Ferguson & Burkhalter, 2014), music videos (Burkhalter & Thornton, 2012), Broadway musicals (R. T. Wilson & Till, 2011), games (Gangadharbatla et al., 2013; Lee & Faber, 2007; Lin, 2014; Peters & Leshner, 2013) and new media (Chin et al., 2012; Eagle & Dahl, 2015). Historically, little attention has been paid to product placements in text, but this is changing, with several relevant studies appearing in recent years.

Brennan (2008) investigated the recall effects of omitting letters from a brand name in a short novel. Previous studies suggest that memory for an advertisement can be enhanced when subjects are required to generate (rather than read) information. He found that mild fragmentation of the brand name (e.g. the omission of a single letter) resulted in higher levels of brand recall than a complete brand name, and therefore concluded that an author who includes a reference to a well-known brand in a novel can enhance recall for the brand by omitting a small portion of the brand name. He argued that, as brand names are often repeated multiple times in a novel, it might be possible to initially introduce a brand in a fragmented form, and then remove the fragmentation in a subsequent reference, so that readers who fail to correctly generate the brand name when it first appears, can become aware of the correct brand name after the subsequent reference.

Brennan & McCalman (2011) examined the effect of brand placement on consumer memory. Although they used textbooks, rather than fictional sources, their results demonstrated the effects of brand

repetition in text on brand recall, recognition and choice. They also looked at the impact of brand familiarity on the effectiveness of brand placement. The results of their experiments indicated that the placement of a familiar brand performed better than that of an unfamiliar brand with respect to both recall and recognition. When familiar brand names were repeated in the text, this further improved their unaided recall, but the same increase did not occur for unfamiliar brand names. They concluded by suggesting that marketing managers with brand recall and brand recognition objectives should explore opportunities for product/brand placement in books (both fiction and non-fiction). They also stated that future research was needed to consider the extent to which the patronage of leading characters in a novel may condition attitudes towards the companies and products that feature the story, suggesting that an assessment of such conditioning effects is likely to be of particular interest to marketers with brands that compete in markets that lack a dominant brand —markets where conditioning has been shown to influence brand choice.

Manzano (2010) studied the effects of prominent and subtle product placements in novels on different types of memory. Participants demonstrated implicit memory for the brands placed in the narrative, regardless of placement prominence. Similarly, when asked to create a shopping list naming brands in given product categories, participants included more products from brands mentioned in the novel, indicating that the placements affected participants' brand preferences. Based on her findings, she concluded that use of product placement in novels is a valid means of influencing awareness and consumer behaviour towards a brand.

Olsen & Lanseng (2012) studied the relationship between plot integration and brand attitude in fiction. Their results demonstrated that brands which were placed differently in narrative texts have different attitudinal effects. They found that those brands which played an important role in the story (i.e. those with high levels of plot integration) were more favourably evaluated than those with low plot integration; however, they also found that these results were qualified by the level of reader involvement. Involved readers evaluated highly plot-integrated brands more favourably than lowly plot-integrated brands; however less involved readers evaluated the placed brands at the same level, regardless of their level of plot integration. They concluded by stating that narrative texts can serve important roles as media channels for brands. They suggested that brand managers should look for opportunities to place their brands in novels read by their target market, arguing that the use of fictitious literary characters can help in positioning a brand; that novels provide a useful context for demonstrating a brand's usage areas; and that the portrayal of new brands in popular fiction can create brand awareness (although previous research would seem to suggest that placement of existing, familiar, brands is more effective at generating recall and recognition (Brennan & McCalman, 2011)).

Storm & Stoller (2014) explored the impact of product placement in text in relation to purchase intention. Their research tested the validity of the mere exposure effect. They asked subjects to read three short stories containing the names of several brand-name products. Participants were then asked to rate their likelihood of purchasing a number of brands - some of which were placed and some of which were not placed in the stories. Across five different experiments, they found that participants rated placed brands significantly higher than non-placed brands, an effect that increased with the number of times a given brand was placed. This effect was observed even when participants were warned about product placement prior to reading the stories, and even when participants reported having a negative opinion about product placement as a form of advertisement. In common with Brennan & McCalman (2011) they also looked at the impact of brand familiarity on the results of their experiments, finding that judgments of familiar brands were affected less by product placement than were judgments of unfamiliar brands; thus supporting Olsen & Lanseng's suggestion that novels may be a suitable medium for the placement of new brands. Another interesting finding was that the effects remained significant after a 1-week delay between exposure and testing.

Brennan (2015) investigated whether placement of a brand name in a novel resulted in negative effects on the recall of competitive brands. This is based on the part-list cueing effect whereby when some items become more prominent in memory, they will inhibit the retrieval of other items. Four laboratory experiments were undertaken, using brand names placed in both content generated by a researcher and in content adapted from a bestselling author, manipulating placement repetition and plot prominence. The findings indicated that the benefits of brand placements in novels do not extend to impaired recall of competitive brands.

Avramova, De Pelsmacker & Dens (2017b, 2017a) published two papers examining the impact of different conditions on the effectiveness of brand placements in text. The first paper (Avramova et al., 2017b) focused on the effect of brand name repetition on brand attitude. Participants in an experiment read a short story by Jeffrey Archer, altered to feature the target brand. Brand name repetition and brand familiarity were systematically manipulated within different versions of the story. The results showed that brand name repetition positively affected attitude towards an unfamiliar brand, but not a familiar brand. In addition, readers' narrative transportation (how absorbed the reader becomes in the story) and the reader's need for cognition (NFC) (whether the subject finds thinking enjoyable) were found to moderate this effect: attitude towards the brand improved with repetition only when both transportation and NFC were relatively high.

The second paper (Avramova et al., 2017a) examined how differences in the way in which the placement is incorporated into the story (placement modality) affects brand attitude and purchase

intention. In particular it compared the impact of placing the brand name in the dialogue versus the narration of the story. It also measured responses both immediately after exposure and two weeks later. It was found that the appearance of a brand name in the narration of the story resulted in higher brand attitudes than an appearance in dialogue. Purchase intentions were similarly affected, but the effects of this were only significant in the second test, two weeks after the initial exposure. Once again, NFC was found to have a moderating effect, with these effects only observable in participants with a relatively high NFC. In contrast, brand evaluations of readers with low NFC were largely unaffected by placement modality, although dialogue placements were found to enhance purchase intentions for participants with very low NFC in the second test after 2 weeks.

### 6.6.1 Theoretical Framework

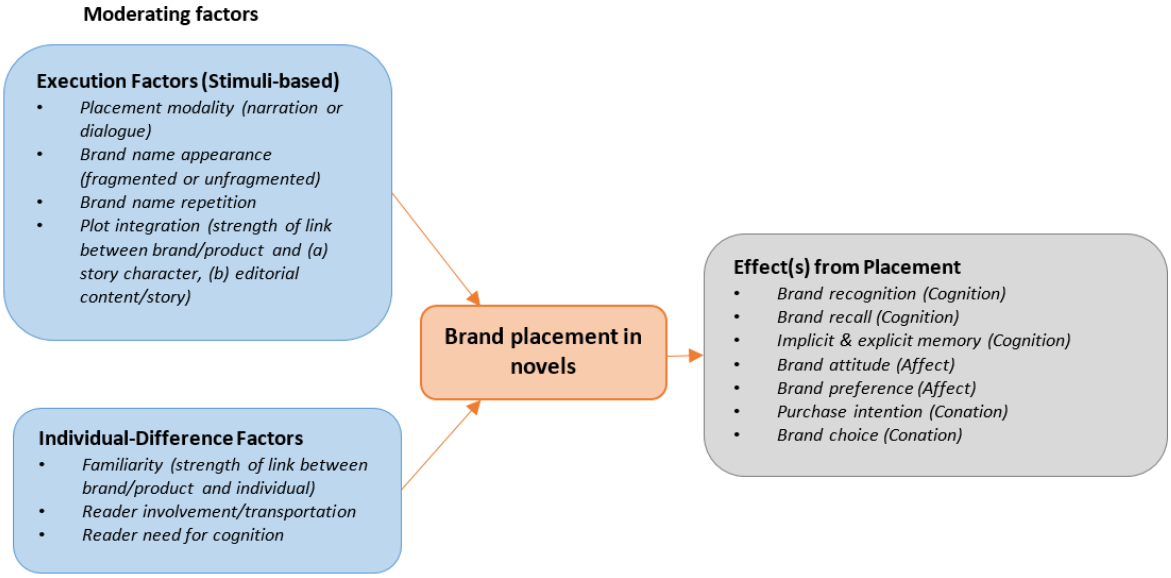
Together, the studies presented indicate that brand placement in texts has an impact on brand recall (Brennan, 2008; Brennan & McCalman, 2011), recognition (Brennan & McCalman, 2011), memory (Manzano, 2010), attitude (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b), preference (Manzano, 2010), choice (Brennan & McCalman, 2011) and purchase intention (Avramova et al., 2017a; Storm & Stoller, 2014). Some studies also indicated that these impacts are enduring, with measurable effects noted one and two weeks after exposure (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b; Storm & Stoller, 2014).

However, these effects are moderated by a number of factors, including: placement modality (Avramova et al., 2017a; Brennan, 2008), repetition (Avramova et al., 2017b; Brennan & McCalman, 2011; Storm & Stoller, 2014), plot integration (Olsen & Lanseng, 2012), brand familiarity (Avramova et al., 2017b; Brennan & McCalman, 2011; Storm & Stoller, 2014), reader involvement/transportation (Avramova et al., 2017b; Olsen & Lanseng, 2012) and need for cognition (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b).

Placement prominence (Manzano, 2010), readers' attitudes to product placement and disclosure of placements (Storm & Stoller, 2014) appear to have no effect on the results. All of the studies conclude that novels represent a viable medium for commercial product placement.

Relating these findings to the Balasubramanian et al. (2006, p. 117) framework of product placement results in the following theoretical framework for brand placement in novels.

**Figure 6.2** *Integrative Framework of Brand Placement in Novels*




## 6.7 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provides a summary of the literature relating to brand name usage in novels as a form of product placement. It has identified some well publicised examples of commercial product placement in novels but notes that paid product placement in novels appears to be relatively rare.

Although most product placement research has tended to focus on placements in movies and TV programmes, there is a growing body of literature examining the effectiveness of placements in written texts and the findings of these studies suggest that novels could be a viable product placement medium. Based on this literature, a theoretical framework has been proposed to summarise the moderating factors and effects relating to brand placement in novels. Elements of this framework will be tested in the primary research phase of this study.

The literature also suggests that commercial product placement in novels is a controversial area, but to date there has been no detailed investigation of consumer attitudes towards this practice. This is another area which will be addressed in the primary research.

The next chapter describes the procedures and methods used in the primary research phase of this investigation.

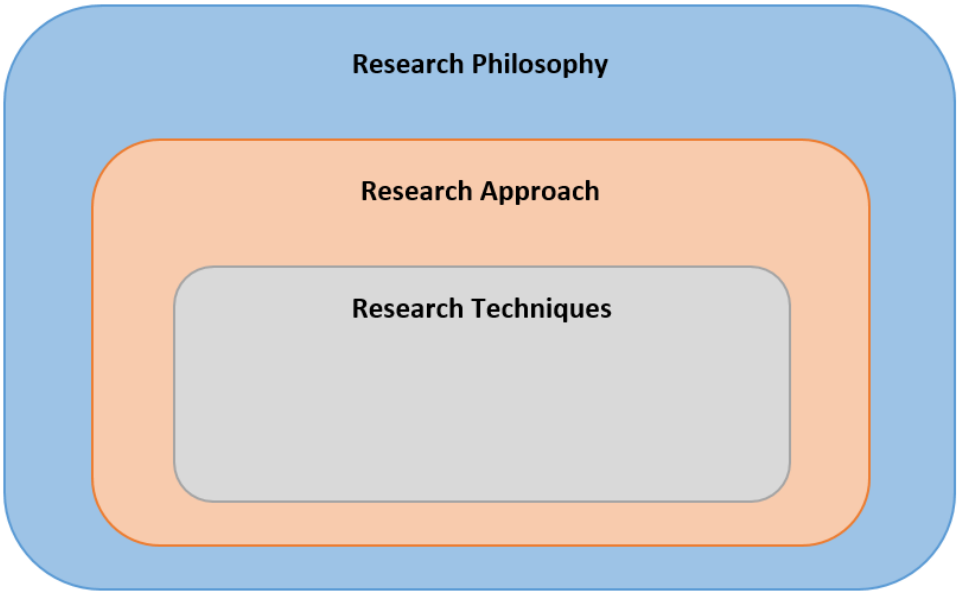
# Chapter 7: Methodology

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological choices made during this project.

Kagioglou, Cooper, Aouad, & Sexton (2000) propose a nested model to guide decisions related to research methodology. This model is comprised of three inter-related layers: research philosophy, research approach and research techniques, where the selection of research techniques is based on the chosen research approach, and the selection of the research approach is dependent on the philosophical standpoint of the research.

**Figure 7.1** *The Nested Model of Research Methodology (Kagioglou et al., 2000)*




The chapter begins by discussing the philosophical underpinnings of the research project, before outlining the research approach taken and then describing the research techniques employed.

## 7.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012). There are three sets of assumptions which underpin research philosophy: ontological assumptions (assumptions about the nature of reality), epistemological assumptions (assumptions about how knowledge should be acquired and developed) and axiological assumptions (assumptions about the role of the researcher's own values in the research process) (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### 7.2.1 Ontology

The aim of this project is to explore the use of fashion brand names in chick lit from a marketing perspective, focusing on the relationships between fashion brands, authors, fictitious characters and readers. As discussed in the literature review, brands may be viewed as something constructed in the mind of the consumer, and fictitious characters may be viewed as something constructed in the mind of the reader; therefore it might seem appropriate to adopt a subjectivist ontological position, which views reality as being socially constructed (Saunders et al., 2012); however other elements of the research (such as measuring the extent to which fashion brand names appear in specific novels) are relatively independent of social actors, and therefore objectivism might be considered to be a more appropriate philosophical standpoint (Saunders et al., 2012).

The objectives of the research call for an analysis of the use of fashion brand names in selected chick lit novels. Dieronitou (2014) argues that content analysis of text incorporates both quantitative and qualitative elements, and therefore needs a hybrid approach to both ontology and epistemology. Pragmatists argue that it is possible to work with different philosophical positions within a single research project, as there are many different ways of undertaking research and no single point of view can give the entire answer (Saunders et al., 2012), therefore a pragmatic ontological position has been adopted for this study.

### 7.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology relates to what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Saunders et al., 2012). It can be represented by a continuum where the extremes are positivism (a scientific-style search for general laws and relationships working with an observable reality) and interpretivism (a search for explanations of human action by understanding the way that the world is understood by individuals). Dieronitou (2014, p. 13) argues that in content analysis of texts, the researcher "*shuffles back and forth between positivism, interpretivism and critical theory*" and that the analyst "*should make all possible kinds of epistemological claims*" (Dieronitou, 2014, p. 15). Similarly, Saunders et al (2012) suggest that with a pragmatic ontology either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge and that the researchers' focus should be on integrating different perspectives to try to interpret the data. Therefore, a flexible, integrative position has been taken in relation to epistemology.

### 7.2.3 Axiology

Axiology relates to the role that the researcher's own values play in the research process (Saunders et al., 2012). In pragmatism the researcher's values play a large role in interpreting the results obtained,

although the researcher may attempt to consider the results from both objective and subjective viewpoints (Saunders et al., 2012). An interpretive approach is founded on the principle of seeking to understand the meanings created by people in their everyday lives. The researcher's job is to share in this world of meaning to reach an understanding of the world from the subject's viewpoint, therefore subjective thoughts and feelings move to the forefront of the researcher's attention and the research is inevitably value-biased (Kawamura, 2013).

## 7.3 Research Approach

Determining a research approach involves making decisions in a number of areas including the general approach to be adopted in relation to theory, methodological choice and research strategies.

### 7.3.1 Relationship with theory

All research involves theory, however there are three basic approaches to research, depending on the extent to which the theory is known and understood at the start of the project. The first approach involves deductive reasoning – a hypothesis is derived from existing theory and then tested (Jenss, 2016). Deductive inferences therefore proceed from generalisations to particulars (Krippendorff, 2004). The second approach involves inductive reasoning – the researcher seeks to build new theory inductively allowing multiple perspectives to emerge from the research itself (Jenss, 2016). Inductive inferences therefore proceed from particulars to generalisations (Krippendorff, 2004). The third approach is abductive reasoning, which entails generating insights from data and making inferences to the best possible explanation for the observed phenomena. Where observations cannot be explained by existing theories the researcher seeks to generate and justify alternative hypotheses (Mitchell, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). Abductive inferences therefore proceed across separate domains – from particulars of one kind to particulars of another (Krippendorff, 2004) .

#### *7.3.1.1 Abductive approach*

A pragmatic ontology is underpinned by a belief that research cannot be exclusively driven by either theory or data, instead it requires abductive reasoning that moves back and forth between induction and deduction (Mitchell, 2018; Morgan, 2007). Analysing data abductively, moving back and forth between data sets and the insights produced by each one, then bringing them together, enables data to be interpreted from a multidimensional perspective with each data set informed, questioned and enhanced by the others (Feilzer, 2010).

An abductive approach such as this is recommended for textual analysis (Bauer, Bicquelet & Suerdem, 2014; Krippendorff, 2004). Textual analysis involves both a consideration of the structural features of the text (e.g. word frequencies) and interpretation to understand the meaning behind the structure. The researcher tries to understand the intentions of the author, the text itself and the reader (Bauer

et al., 2014), with inferences proceeding from texts to the answers to the researcher's questions (Krippendorff, 2004). An abductive approach has therefore been adopted for this study – structural and interpretive textual analysis has been used to explore the use of fashion brand names in chick lit novels from a range of perspectives, identifying themes and exploring patterns to develop insights and inferences, then seeking to elaborate, enhance and corroborate these inferences through additional data collection with both authors and readers.

### 7.3.2 Methodological choice

There are two basic types of research methodologies: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative methodologies use techniques which seek to quantify data and usually apply some form of measurement and statistical analysis; whilst qualitative methodologies typically use techniques based on small samples, intended to provide depth, insight and understanding of a phenomenon (Malhotra et al., 2012). Saunders et al. (2012) argue that this binary division is problematic, as many research designs combine both types of methodology. They suggest that it is more helpful to consider quantitative and qualitative methodologies in relation to philosophical assumptions, research approaches and strategies. Quantitative methodologies tend to be associated with positivist assumptions, a deductive approach and experimental or survey strategies; whilst qualitative methodologies tend to be associated with interpretivist assumptions, an inductive approach and strategies such as case study research, ethnography, grounded research and narrative research (Saunders et al., 2012).

#### *7.3.2.1 Mixed methods research*

This research adopts a mixed methods approach. Mixed methods research is defined as:

> *"the type of research in which a researcher … combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration"* (R. B. Johnson et al., 2007, p. 123).

This is consistent with both a pragmatic research ontology and an abductive approach.

A mixed methods research design allows the researcher to answer a broader and more complete range of research questions because the researcher is not confined to a single methodology (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It aims to capitalise on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, whilst minimising the weaknesses of a more conventional single approach (Mitchell, 2018). The overall goal of mixed methods research is to expand and strengthen a study's conclusions through adding insights and understanding that might be missed with a mono-method approach, producing more complete knowledge to inform theory and practice, and providing

stronger evidence to support conclusions through convergence and corroboration of findings (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

Greene et al. (1989) identify five key rationales for conducting a mixed methods study: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion. These are summarised in Table 7.1 below:

**Table 7.1** *Rationales for Mixed Method Research Designs (Adapted from: Greene et al., 1989)*

| | Purpose | Rationale |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Triangulation | To increase the validity of findings by seeking convergence, corroboration and correspondence of results from the different methods. |
| 2 | Complementarity | To increase the interpretability, meaningfulness and validity of findings though the elaboration, enhancement, illustration or clarification of results from one method with the results from another. |
| 3 | Development | To increase the validity of findings by using the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method. |
| 4 | Initiation | To discover paradoxes and contradictions that lead to a re-framing of the research question by analysing findings from the different perspectives of different methods and paradigms. |
| 5 | Expansion | Extending the breadth and scope of inquiry by using the most appropriate methods for different inquiry components. |

A study may mix methods for more than one purpose (Meister, 2018). In this study, the adoption of a mixed methods approach has been driven by both expansion and complementarity. Mixed methods research designs allow the researcher to choose the combination of methods and procedures that work best for each of the study's objectives and research questions (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), thus allowing for a greater breadth and scope of inquiry. In the case of this study, some of the research objectives were best addressed with quantitative data (e.g. to establish the extent to which fashion brand names are mentioned in selected novels), whilst others could be better addressed with qualitative data (e.g. to critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels). By adopting a mixed methods design, the most appropriate methods could be selected for each of the components of the study, with some elements examined from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. This approach also aimed to increase the interpretability, meaningfulness and validity of the findings through elaboration and clarification of the results from one method with the results from another.

Researchers have to make decisions in three key areas when creating mixed method research designs, these relate to (i) the timing of the quantitative and qualitative methods, (ii) how the data from the qualitative and quantitative methods will be mixed, and (iii) the relative weighting of the quantitative and qualitative methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2012). This study adopted a convergent parallel design (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017) where the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research were

performed independently but simultaneously (rather than sequentially). The data from each strand was analysed separately and then the results brought together in the final interpretation and discussion. In terms of the balance between quantitative and qualitative methods, the research design was weighted towards quantitative methods using summative textual analysis and quantitative surveys of authors and consumers, supplemented by qualitative textual analysis of the novels.

Previous studies of the use of brand names in novels have used a variety of research designs. Some (e.g. S. Brown, 1995a; Friedman, 1985) adopt a purely quantitative approach, focusing on counting and classifying brand names within the text; whilst others (e.g. Bullen, 2009; Hoeller, 1994) adopt a purely qualitative approach, focusing on the role of the brand names within the narrative. However, many take a mixed methods approach, combining counts of brand names with a qualitative analysis of the way in which the brand names are used in the text (e.g. (S. Brown, 1995b; Dorney, 2004; N. R. Johnson, 2010). Many experts advocate this type of mixed methods approach to textual analysis (Bauer et al., 2014; Dieronitou, 2014; Krippendorff, 2004). Whilst it would have been possible to approach the study of the novels from a purely structural, quantitative approach, the qualitative insights helped to explain how fashion brand names were used in the text and their role in character construction. Similarly, whilst it would have been possible to take a purely qualitative approach to the textual analysis, the addition of a quantitative element helped to establish the extent to which different types of brand names were used in the text and allowed comparisons to be made with Friedman's extensive study of the use of brand names in American best sellers.

The textual analysis was supported by quantitative surveys of authors and consumers designed to explore authors' reasons for including fashion brand names in their narratives, the impact of the appearance of the brands on the reader in terms of character construction, brand recall and brand attitude, and readers' attitudes towards brand placement in novels. Whilst it would have been possible to take a qualitative approach to these elements of the research using depth interviews or focus groups, the use of a quantitative survey of authors enabled data collection from a large group of published authors – a group who would have been difficult to reach using a more time-consuming qualitative approach. Nevertheless, the adoption of a pragmatist, mixed methods framework meant that it was possible to regard comments and explanations volunteered by authors in response to the author survey as additional qualitative data, allowing new and deeper dimensions to emerge from this quantitative study (Feilzer, 2010). The use of a quantitative consumer survey enabled data collection from a larger number of respondents, permitted the use of statistical analysis to test the relationship between readers' perceptions of brand personality and character personality, and allowed comparisons to be made with previous studies of the impact of product placement on consumers (e.g.

Avramova et al., 2017a; Brennan & McCalman, 2011) and the attitudes of consumers to product placement in different media (e.g. de Gregorio & Sung, 2009; Gupta & Gould, 1997).

### 7.3.3 Research strategies:

A research strategy identifies, in broad terms, how a researcher intends to answer their research questions and meet their research objectives. The choice of research strategy should therefore be guided by the research questions and objectives, but should also be linked to the identified research philosophy and approach (Saunders et al., 2012). Saunders et al. (2012) identify eight possible research strategies in relation to business research: experiment, survey, archival research, case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory and narrative enquiry. This list of research is not exhaustive as other disciplines may use a different range of strategies; for example, Kawamura (2013) identifies semiotics/semiology, object-based research and literary analysis as additional potential strategies in fashion research. Research strategies should not be thought of as mutually exclusive as it is possible to combine a number of different strategies within a mixed methods approach (Saunders et al., 2012).

This research utilises two principal research strategies: textual analysis and surveys.

#### *7.3.3.1 Textual analysis*

Textual analysis involves analysing and interpreting the content and meaning of existing texts (Markula & Silk, 2011). In this sense, it appears to be more of a data analysis technique than a research strategy, however Markula & Silk (2011) argue that it can form the main methodological framework for a research project. Any written text can be chosen as a source for textual analysis (Markula & Silk, 2011); this project focuses on chick lit novels as the texts to be analysed.

Analysis of fictional texts is an established research strategy in a number of disciplines (Brinkmann, 2014; Filmer, 2011; Yue & Durepos, 2012) including marketing and consumer research (Belk, 1986; S. Brown, 1996, 2005, 1995b; Fitchett, 2002; Friedman, 1991; Kassarjian, 1977; Patterson & Brown, 1999; Stern, 1989). It involves analysing the structural features of the text and interpreting these to understand the meaning of the text. This process is abductive in nature, building hypotheses from both structural patterns in the text and researcher-generated insights (Bauer et al., 2014).

Textual analysis involves both quantitative and qualitative elements. Quantitative textual analysis focuses on the structure of the text, identifying and counting the appearance of particular words or clusters of words, using techniques such as corpus linguistics, text mining and summative content analysis (Bauer et al., 2014). Qualitative textual analysis focuses on understanding the intentions of the text, its author and its audience, including the researcher, from their own perspectives. It uses a

range of interpretive techniques, including those drawn from semiotics and hermeneutics (Bauer et al., 2014). It is a reflexive activity, providing the researcher with insights through reading the text and making comparisons to their own experiences, modifying their perception of the world and coming to a common construction of social reality (Bauer et al., 2014).

The use of some form of textual analysis is implicit in the objectives of this study, which include "to establish the extent to which fashion brand names are mentioned in selected novels" and "to critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels". A content analysis approach to textual analysis has been adopted, using both summative (quantitative) and qualitative techniques.

Summative content analysis may be defined as *"the objective, systematic, quantitative study of texts"* (S. Brown, 1995a, p. 774). It may be used to study both individual texts and series of texts (S. Brown, 1995a). It is a way of examining the structure of a text through coding, classifying and tabulating specific elements within it (Krippendorff, 2004). Palmer (1991) argues that a summative content analysis approach is questionable in the context of the analysis of fictional texts, as it is difficult to consistently categorise and code segments of a fictional narrative; however Brown (1995a) dismisses these concerns in relation to investigations of the use of brand names in novels, arguing that coding is not an issue for studies which are confined primarily to the citation of established brand names, which are easily identified within the text. Accordingly, this approach to textual analysis is frequently used for studies of the use of brand names in fictional texts (e.g. S. Brown, 1995a; Dorney, 2004; Friedman, 1985).

Both Bauer et al. (2014) and Krippendorf (2004) question the validity of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative textual analysis, suggesting that ultimately all reading of texts is qualitative. Nevertheless, an explicit qualitative content analysis phase complements summative content analysis offering an alternative method of systematically exploring texts. Hsieh & Shannon (2005, p. 1278) define qualitative content analysis as "*the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*". Qualitative approaches to textual analysis have their roots in literary theory, social sciences and critical scholarship. They focus on interpretation and meaning, examining how particular phenomena are represented in the text (Krippendorff, 2004). In this study, the qualitative textual analysis focused on the context in which fashion brand names were used within the narratives. A conventional open approach to qualitative content analysis was used, with codes being derived from the content of the text and defined during data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

*7.3.3.2 Surveys*

Survey research may be defined as "*the systematic gathering of information from respondents for the purpose of understanding and/or predicting some aspect of the behaviour of the population of interest*" (Tull & Hawkins, 1987, p. 96). Surveys tend to be associated with a deductive research approach and are mainly used to collect quantitative data which is then analysed statistically.

Questionnaire-based surveys are the most common method of collecting primary data in marketing research (Malhotra et al., 2012; Tull & Hawkins, 1987). They can provide descriptive data, for example relating to respondents' characteristics, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and behaviour (Tull & Hawkins, 1987) and they can also be used to investigate and model relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2012).

Most surveys are based on the use of structured questionnaires administered to a sample of the target population. Participants may be asked a range of questions concerning their behaviour, attitudes, opinions, intentions, awareness and motivations, as well as demographic and other classification questions (Malhotra et al., 2012). In this research project, two surveys were used: a survey of chick lit authors and a consumer survey. Both surveys used a structured, self-administered online questionnaire. The advantages and disadvantages of this research strategy are summarised in the table below.

**Table 7.2** *Advantages and Disadvantages of Structured Online Questionnaire Surveys (Adapted from Malhotra et al., 2012)*

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|
| • Flexibility of data collection<br>• Speed of data collection<br>• Low cost<br>• Diversity of questions<br>• Simple to administer<br>• Generates a good quantity of data<br>• No interviewer bias<br>• Consistency of data<br>• Ease of coding, analysis and interpretation<br>• Perceived participant anonymity<br>• Low susceptibility to socially desirable responses (i.e.: participants giving an answer that they feel is socially acceptable rather than accurate) | • Variable response rates<br>• Limited sample control<br>• Limited potential to probe participants<br>• Limited potential to build raport with participants<br>• Participants may be unwilling/unable to provide accurate information<br>• Participants may be unwilling to respond to questions asking for sensitive or personal data<br>• Structured questions with fixed responses may result in loss of validity for some types of data such as beliefs or feelings<br>• The questionnaire imposes the language and logic of the researcher on respondents |

In this study, the advantages of flexibility, volume of data, ease of administration and perceived participant anonymity, were considered to outweigh any disadvantages of this method. However,

significant effort was made to control the samples, maximise response rates and use an appropriate survey instrument in order to minimise the potential shortcomings.

The use of the author and consumer surveys alongside the qualitative and quantitative textual analysis provided greater insight into the reasons why authors use fashion brand names in their novels and the impact that the appearance of these brand names have on the reader.

## 7.4 Research Techniques

Research techniques are the specific methods used to collect and analyse data to answer the research questions. For this project, these techniques were summative content analysis and qualitative content analysis (which together form the textual analysis element of the research), and questionnaire-based surveys of chick lit authors and female consumers.

Table 7.3 indicates how the selected research techniques contribute to achieving the objectives set out in section 1.2.

**Table 7.3** *Methods used to achieve the project objectives*

| | Objectives | Methods |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | To investigate why authors use fashion brand names in novels. | • Author Survey |
| 2 | To establish the extent to which fashion brand names are mentioned in selected novels. | • Summative content analysis |
| 3 | To critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels. | • Summative content analysis<br>• Qualitative content analysis<br>• Consumer survey |
| 4 | To measure the impact of fashion brand placement in novels in terms of: (i) brand recall; and (ii) brand attitudes | • Consumer survey |
| 5 | To identify reader attitudes towards brand placement in novels | • Consumer survey |
| 6 | To extrapolate the potential commercial benefits of fashion brand product placement in novels. | • Author Survey<br>• Consumer Survey |

### 7.4.1 Textual analysis: selection of texts

Selection of the texts to analyse was purposive, with a focus on novels with a high incidence of fashion brand names. This is in line with previous research in the area (see Appendix A for a summary of samples used in previous research). Most previous studies of brand names in novels have been based around a detailed analysis of a small number of texts. With the exception of Friedman's survey, most studies make a purposive selection of texts, chosen specifically to represent the use of brand names in novels, and taken from a particular genre (e.g. sex and shopping, chick lit, teen fiction), where brand usage is recognised as a commonly used narrative technique. This study focuses on British chick lit. Chick lit is a popular fiction genre for women, characterised by its reflection of contemporary

consumer culture, therefore there was a high probability that the selected novels used fashion brand names within their narrative.

Three best-selling chick lit series were studied: Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* series; Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic* series, and Lindsey Kelk's *I Heart* series. The use of series with established sets of characters provided more opportunity to study the links between brand name usage and character than the use of stand-alone novels.

Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) represents the beginning of the chick lit phenomenon (Dorney, 2004), and establishes some of the key characteristics of the genre. It is also the best-selling series within the genre. The original book in the series, *Bridget Jones's Diary* was published in 1996 and won Book of the Year at the British Book Awards in 1998 (Flint, 2014). A sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, was published in 1999. Both books were made into successful films, and by 2014 the two books had sold a combined total of over 15 million copies across 40 countries since their release (Flint, 2014). Fielding published the third book in the series, *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, in 2013. This book sold more than 46,000 copies on its day of release, across hardback, ebook and audiobook formats (O'Brien, 2014), with total sales reaching a million copies when the paperback edition was released in June 2014 (Flint, 2014). The latest novel in the series, *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries* (2016) is set in the time period between the second and third books in the series, and was preceded by the release of the film *Bridget Jones's Baby*. Harzewski (2011) identifies *Bridget Jones Diary* as the most "*canonical of chick lit titles*" (Harzewski, 2011, p. 59).

Kinsella's *Shopaholic* novels represent a particular exaggeration of the typical chick lit emphasis on consumption – the stories' main protagonist, Becky Bloomwood, is a compulsive shopper, and therefore brand names are heavily used within the narrative. The first novel in the series, *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic* was published in 2000 and was made into a film (*Confessions of a Shopaholic*), in 2009. This study covered the first eight novels in the *Shopaholic* series, a ninth book, *Christmas Shopaholic,* was released in October 2019 but does not form part of this study. To date, Kinsella has sold over 40 million copies of her books in 60 countries (Kinsella, 2020).

Kelk's *I Heart* series is newer than the others and therefore represents a more modern take on the genre; however, in many ways, it adheres closely to the key characteristics of chick lit established by *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Kelk is a keen user of social media, with a popular blog, as well as regularly updated Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumbler, Instagram and YouTube accounts. Her first novel, *I Heart New York*, was published in 2009. It tells the story of Angela Clark, a children's book author who moves to New York and finds work writing a blog for a fashion magazine. The book includes a mini travel guide at the end, with Angela's recommendations of restaurants, shops and hotels in New York.

The launch of the book was supported by a website (www.iheartnewyork.co.uk) offering readers "*a chance to win exclusive products, keep up-to-date with Angela's adventures abroad through her blog, read Angela's top tips for where to drink, eat, shop and sleep in New York and much more*" (Kelk, 2009). The travel guide and extension of the fictional character into the online environment opens up enhanced opportunities for product placement associated with the novel. Each of the first six novels follow the same format, with "*Angela's Guide to…"* at the end of the book. In *I Heart Forever* this is replaced by a Q&A with the author ("*I Heart Your Questions!*"). This study covered the first seven novels in the *I Heart* series; the final book in the series, *I Heart Hawaii,* was published in May 2019 but does not form part of this study. Kelk's books have been published in 25 languages and have sold over two million copies worldwide (Kelk, 2020).

The table below lists the books included in this study:

**Table 7.4** *Sample of novels included in this study*

| Helen Fielding<br>Bridget Jones | Sophie Kinsella<br>Shopaholic | Lindsey Kelk<br>I Heart |
|---|---|---|
| *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) | *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic (2000)* | *I Heart New York* (2009) |
| *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999) | *Shopaholic Abroad* (2001) | *I Heart Hollywood* (2010) |
| *Bridget Jones: Mad about the Boy* (2013) | *Shopaholic Ties the Knot* (2002) | *I Heart Paris* (2010) |
| *Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries* (2016) | *Shopaholic and Sister* (2004) | *I Heart Vegas* (2011) |
| | *Shopaholic and Baby* (2007) | *I Heart London* (2012) |
| | *Mini Shopaholic* (2010) | *I Heart Christmas* (2013) |
| | *Shopaholic to the Stars* (2014) | *I Heart Forever* (2017) |
| | *Shopaholic to the Rescue (2015)* | |

A plot synopsis of each book in the corpus is provided in Appendix B.

### 7.4.2 Textual analysis: summative content analysis

Summative content analysis involves identifying and quantifying the appearance of particular words in a text. The quantification is used to explore usage and focuses on counting the frequency with which the words are used, followed by interpretation of the underlying context (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Wiese et al., 2012). This is the methodology used by Friedman (1985) and S. Brown (1995a, 1995b), to analyse the use of brand names in novels.

#### *7.4.2.1 Procedure*

The Amazon Kindle ebook versions (.azw) of each novel were converted to pdf files using EPubsoft convertor. The resulting files were then imported into NVivo 12 for analysis. Each of the novels was read by the researcher in its entirety within NVivo, scrutinising the text for the presence of brand names. All of the brand names mentioned in the novels (both fashion and non-fashion) were identified and coded both in vivo (i.e. using the brand name in the text as the code) and also using predefined

product category classifications, based on those utilised by Friedman (1985) and S. Brown (1995a, 1995b), so as to allow comparison with previous works.

Fashion brands were considered in more depth than in previous studies, with additional classification nodes added for product type to allow an examination of the association of brand name with product (see Appendix C for the classification system). In addition, where appropriate, each of the fashion brands were also coded to case nodes, identifying the character in the novel associated with the product mentioned, to allow an examination of the association of fashion brands with characters.

The completeness, consistency and accuracy of coding was extensively checked using the text search and coding query functions in NVivo in order to ensure that all brand names mentioned in the novels were identified and correctly coded. As each brand name was coded both to a brand name node and a product category node, a matrix coding query was performed at the end of each series analysis to ensure that coding matched in both categories.

The word count of each novel was needed in order to calculate brand name frequency and variety measures. To generate this, the Kindle ebook version of each novel was converted to a Microsoft Word file using EPubsoft convertor. The front and end matter of the books was deleted from each file, leaving only the main body of the novel. The word count function in Microsoft Word was then used to count the number of words in the document.

#### *7.4.2.2 Brand name identification*

As discussed earlier, there is not a single, universally accepted, definition of a brand name. In order to ensure comparability with previous studies, Friedman's working definition of a brand was adopted, i.e. a brand is defined as:

> *"…a distinctive commercial term used by a firm to identify or promote itself or one or more of its consumer products or services. By this definition, brand names may refer to products or services as well as to manufacturers or retailers. They may or may not be registered as trademarks…"* (Friedman, 1991, p. 27)

Friedman's study included only national brand names in its analysis in order to avoid the problems posed by references to local retail establishments. As verification is now easier, thanks to the Internet, this limitation was not observed in the current study. Unfamiliar brand names were verified using online sources including the UK Government's online trademark search facility (https://www.gov.uk/search-for-trademark), Justia Trademarks (https://trademarks.justia.com/), Google and Wikipedia. Similarly, Friedman excluded some brand names in his analysis because their appearance was deemed necessary to the fictional account central to the novelist's theme. No brand

names were excluded for this reason in the current study, but where their frequent appearance is as a result of their centrality to the storyline, this was noted.

#### *7.4.2.3 Brand name measures*

In order to facilitate comparisons to the work of Friedman (1985, 1991) and S. Brown (1995a, 1996), Friedman's brand name frequency and brand name variety measures were used to present the results of the content analysis of each book. These measures both include a factor to correct for books of differing lengths.

The ***brand name frequency measure*** is calculated as follows:

*(number of brand name mentions in a book/number of words in the book) x 10,000*

The resulting figure represents the frequency with which brand names occur per 10,000 words of text in a given book.

The ***brand name variety measure*** is calculated as follows:

*(number of brand name varieties mentioned in a book/number of words in the book) x 10,000*

The resulting figure therefore represents the number of different brand names contained per 10,000 words of text in a given book. This measure is typically lower than the brand name frequency measure and the difference between the two measures reflects the degree of repetition of discrete brand name varieties within a book.

In calculating this measure, Friedman (1991, p. 28) defined a brand name variety as "*…a generalised brand name that may assume one or more particular forms."* So, for example, *Marks and Spencer* is a brand name variety that may assume several such forms, e.g. *Marks & Spencer, M&S, Marks and Sparks*. For the purpose of the brand name variety measure, one or more mentions of any of these forms in a particular novel would count as a single variety. In addition, in this study, where a product has both a family brand and a product name (e.g. *Ford Fiesta* or *Gucci Guilty*), it has been coded under the family brand name (i.e. *Ford* or *Gucci*). Sub-brands and diffusion brands (e.g. *Marc by Marc Jacobs*) have also been coded under the main family brand name (i.e. *Marc Jacobs*).

### 7.4.3 Textual analysis: qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is a frequently used method of analysing text data. It goes beyond counting words, and instead concentrates on contextual meaning, sorting elements of the text into categories representing similar meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh & Shannon (2005, p. 1278) define qualitative content analysis as "*the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*".

#### *7.4.3.1 Procedure*

Using the same procedure as that used for the summative content analysis, pdf versions of the novels were read within NVivo.

The qualitative content analysis focused on the characters' interactions with fashion brands and their fashion consumption behaviour. An inductive, open coding process was followed to identify relevant themes in the narratives, and then to classify and code passages within the text to thematic nodes in NVivo.

#### *7.4.3.2 Data Analysis*

Following the open coding process, the resulting nodes were grouped under higher order headings, collecting together those themes which were similar or related. In this way, key elements of the relationships between fashion brands and characters within the selected novels were explored (see Appendix D for the final coding structure).

### 7.4.4 Survey: author questionnaire

A survey methodology is based upon the administration of a structured questionnaire to a sample of a target population (Malhotra et al., 2012). In this study two online questionnaires were used. The first surveyed chick lit authors.

#### *7.4.4.1 Questionnaire design*

A structured questionnaire was designed to investigate a range of issues based on the literature reviewed (see Appendix E for an outline of the author questionnaire). In order to maximise response rate, the questionnaire for authors was kept short and simple.

The first question asked the respondent to identify the genre(s) of the novels that they write. Although the respondents were drawn from a list of chick lit authors, many authors write in more than one genre, which may influence the way that they use brand names. The list of genres was based on the categories used in Mintel's books and ebooks survey, with the addition of "chick lit" as a specific category and "young adult" and "children's fiction" (the Mintel survey only covers books for adults).

The next set of questions (2 and 3) aimed to establish whether the respondent used fashion brand names in their work, and if so what type of brand names they use (i.e. luxury and designer or high street brands).

Question 4 was a multiple response question, asking respondents to indicate why they used fashion brand names in their work. The response options were based on the potential reasons identified in the literature. An "other" option was also available if authors had additional reasons for using fashion brand names in their work.

In question 5, respondents were presented with a list of brand characteristics and asked to rate the importance of each factor when choosing a fashion brand name to include in their work using a 5-point rating scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). The characteristics listed were adapted from a set of brand characteristics leading to effective placements identified in a survey of product placement practitioners (Karrh et al., 2003). This question aimed to identify why authors select specific fashion brands to use in their work.

Questions 6 and 7 asked respondents whether they ever created fictional brand names for use in their work, and if so, in what circumstances they would use a fictional brand in preference to a real-life brand. It was noted in the literature review that some authors used a mixture of real and fictional brands in their work, and these questions aimed to explore the reasons behind this choice.

Question 8 asked whether readers ever commented on the use of fashion brand names in the respondent's novels. In the introduction, it was noted that some readers commented on the use of the Marc Jacobs brand in Lindsey Kelk's I Heart series, and this question aimed to find out whether readers regularly comment on this phenomenon or whether this was specific to this particular set of novels.

Finally, questions 9 to 12 explored issues relating to sponsored product placement in novels. Questions 9 and 10 asked whether respondents had ever been paid a fee to include a specific brand name in a novel, and if so, who negotiated the fee. The literature review identified that there have certainly been some instances of paid product placement in chick lit novels, but it wasn't clear whether this practice was widespread. Question 11 enquired about non-financial incentives (free products or gifts) supplied to an author in return for mentioning a brand name in a novel and question 12 asked whether authors had ever been gifted with free products by a brand mentioned in one of their novels after the book had been published, to ascertain whether this might be a motive for mentioning brand names in novels.

The questionnaire was posted online using the SelectSurvey online survey tool (https://apps.mhs.manchester.ac.uk/surveys) – see Appendix F.

#### *7.4.4.2 Sample*

The respondents were drawn from an A-to-Z list of authors published on the website www.chicklitclub.com. This website claims to offer "*everything you want to know about women's contemporary fiction…including book reviews from the past 12 years*".

The Author A to Z currently contains 1618 authors, all of which have at least one published novel reviewed on the website. As the list does not include contact details, a Google search was conducted

for each author to try to identify their direct contact details. In most instances, where direct contact details were available these were found in the “contact” section of the author’s personal website.

It was not possible to contact all 1618 authors for the following reasons: (a) some listed authors were deceased; (b) some authors did not have a personal website; and (c) some authors did not publish direct contact details on their personal website. In total, contact was made with 388 authors:

- 198 by direct email
- 73 by Facebook messenger
- 3 by Twitter message
- 114 via the online contact form on the author’s personal website

This resulted in a total of 166 valid responses to the online questionnaire.

#### *7.4.4.3 Data analysis*

The results of the survey were downloaded from the online SelectSurvey platform and analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software package.

Multiple response sets were created for questions 1, 4, 9, 11 and 12, and then the Frequencies procedure in SPSS was used to produce a frequency table for each question on the questionnaire. The Descriptives procedure in SPSS was used to calculate mean scores and standard deviations for the scaled data in question 5.

### 7.4.5 Survey: consumer questionnaire

The second online questionnaire surveyed consumers.

#### *7.4.5.1 Questionnaire design*

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure a range of constructs, based on the literature reviewed. The questionnaire used excerpts from the corpus of chick lit novels as stimulus material, followed by a series of questions relating to the passages read and the fashion brands mentioned within them (see Appendix G for an outline of the questions).

The initial questionnaire was piloted with six respondents to test the question wording and ascertain the time taken to complete the questionnaire. Minor amendments were made in response to feedback from the pilot survey.

The first two questions collected demographic information from respondents in order to check that they fit the typical profile of a chick lit reader (i.e. young women). The next two questions were

adapted from the Mintel (2016) survey on books and ebooks and were designed to ascertain whether the respondents were regular readers of fiction and, if so, what types of book they read.

Respondents were then asked to read three excerpts from chick lit novels. Each excerpt described a shopping experience for the protagonist and contained a mix of brand names. The first excerpt was from Lindsey Kelk's *I Heart New York,* which described the experience of Angela, the protagonist, purchasing her Marc Jacobs handbag. The second excerpt was from Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary,* which described Bridget's experiences of shopping for clothes on the High Street. The third excerpt was from Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad*, which described the purchase of a Vera Wang cocktail dress by Becky, the protagonist. After reading each excerpt, respondents were asked a series of questions about the passage. This approach is similar to the quasi-experimental employed in other studies of the effects of brand names in text (e.g. Avramova et al., 2017a; Olsen & Lanseng, 2012).

After reading each story, respondents were asked to assess the character's personality using the "Big Five" personality traits. Initially, this question used a ten-item measure developed by Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann (2003) for use in situations where time is limited and the standard multi-item Big Five personality inventory would be excessively time consuming. Respondents in the pilot study found the ten-item scale to be overly complex and difficult to apply to the characters in the short story excerpts where limited information about the character was available; therefore, Gosling et. al.'s five-item measure (FIPI) was used instead. Although inferior to both the standard Big Five multi-item Inventory and the ten-measure inventory, Gosling et al. (2003) found that the FIPI instrument offers adequate levels of validity and reliability and is a reasonable stand-in for a longer Big-Five instrument when research conditions dictate that a very short measure be used (Gosling et al., 2003).

Respondents were then asked about their attitude towards the character using a seven-point bipolar scale anchored by unlikeable/likeable, unpleasant/pleasant and unattractive/attractive. This scale was based on those used by Russell & Stern (2006) and Avramova et al. (2017b) to measure attitude towards characters in a product placement context. They were also asked to rate how similar they thought they were to the character by answering the question: 'how similar to [the character] do you think you are?' (using a seven-point scale anchored at not similar at all/very similar) and stating the extent to which they agreed with the statements 'I can identify with [the character] in the story' and 'I can easily put myself in the shoes of [the character] in this story (both using a seven-point scale anchored at strongly disagree/strongly agree). These questions mirror those used by Bhatnagar & Wan (2011) to test self-character similarity. Both attitudes towards characters and self-character similarity have been found to influence brand attitudes in previous product placement studies (Avramova et al., 2017b; Bhatnagar & Wan, 2011; Russell & Stern, 2006).

Respondents were then asked to list all of the brand names that they remembered being mentioned in the story excerpt in order to test unaided recall of the brands.

The next question asked respondents to rate the extent to which they agreed that the brands mentioned in the story fitted the character's personality. This question used a single seven-point bipolar scale anchored by strongly disagree/strongly agree). Higher perceived fit between character and brand has been found to be associated with more positive brand attitudes (Avramova et al., 2017b). Avramova et al. (2017b) used a three-item scale to measure perceived fit in their research, but respondents in the pilot survey found that they did not have enough information to make judgements on the other two items: '[the brand] fits her lifestyle; It's logical that she [uses the brand], so they were removed from the final survey.

Having read all three excerpts and answered questions about each of them, respondents were given a prompted recall (brand recognition) test. They were presented with a list of 20 fashion brands (14 of which appeared in the three excerpts and 6 of which did not) and asked to select all of those that they remembered appearing in the stories.

Next, they were asked to indicate how much they liked each of the 20 brands in the previous list in order to measure brand attitude. This question used a single-item seven-point scale anchored at strongly dislike/strongly like. Although many researchers use multi-item scales to measure brand attitude, Bergkvist & Rossiter (2007) argue that single–item measures should be used to measure marketing constructs which consist of a concrete singular object and a concrete attribute, such as brand attitude.

Four brands which were strongly featured in the stories were selected: Marc Jacobs, Warehouse, Vera Wang and Marks & Spencer. Marc Jacobs was featured in the *I Heart* excerpt, Warehouse was featured in the *Bridget Jones* excerpt, Vera Wang was featured in the *Shopaholic* excerpt and Marks & Spencer was mentioned in both the *Bridget Jones and Shopaholic* excerpts. Respondents were asked to assess the personality of each of these brands using the brand personality characteristics and traits identified by Mulyanegara et al. (2009). The question asked respondents to rate the extent to which they felt that each characteristic represented the target brand using a seven-point scale anchored at disagree strongly/agree strongly.

Finally, respondents were asked about their attitudes towards brand placements in books. Although most of the questionnaire used 7-point scales, this question used multiple items measured along a 5-point, Likert-type scale anchored at strongly disagree/strongly agree. The specific items were based on those used by de Gregorio & Sung (2009) and Gould et al., (2000). Opinions vary in relation to the

ideal number of points or categories to use for rating scales. Tull & Hawkins (1987) say that any number of points may be used but suggest that rating scales should generally have between five and seven points. Some researchers suggest that 7-point scales offer more precise and accurate measurements (Alwin, 1997; Finstad, 2010), however Dawes (2012) found that there was no difference in accuracy, with both 5 and 7-point scales producing similar results in terms of central tendency, variation about the mean, skewness and kurtosis. As both de Gregorio & Sung (2009) and Gould et al., (2000) used 5-point scales to measure attitudes towards brand placement, the use of a 5-point scale was retained for this question, allowing straightforward comparisons to be made to previous research relating to attitudes towards brand placements in popular songs and movies.

The final questionnaire was posted online using the Jisc online survey tool (www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/) See Appendix H.

#### *7.4.5.2 Sample*

The survey used a convenience sample of undergraduate fashion marketing students. Undergraduate students are frequently used as a sample population in academic research of this type (e.g. Avramova et al., 2017; Brennan, 2008; Brennan & McCalman, 2011; Storm & Stoller, 2014). Fashion marketing students were selected as they fit the profile of typical chick lit readers (18-40-year-old females) and also have a good awareness and knowledge of fashion brands. Brand familiarity was found to be an issue during the pilot stage, where respondents with low levels of fashion brand knowledge found it difficult to answer questions about unfamiliar brands; by using respondents with a good level of fashion brand knowledge, this issue was minimised. In addition, brand familiarity has been demonstrated to have a moderating effect on the evaluation of brands placed in text (Avramova et al., 2017b). By using respondents who were all likely to be familiar with the brands mentioned, the aim was to minimise the effects of differential levels of brand familiarity.

A link to the questionnaire was emailed to 194 undergraduate fashion students at the University of Leeds, offering entry to a prize draw for a £20 Amazon voucher as an incentive for completing the survey. This resulted in only 14 responses. In order to improve the response rate, two groups of fashion marketing students (one a first year Fashion Brand Analysis class, the other a second year Research Methods class) were asked to complete the survey in a classroom setting. This resulted in a total of 96 valid completed questionnaires.

#### *7.4.5.3 Data analysis*

The results of the survey were downloaded from the online survey platform and analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software package.

Many of the questions on the survey generated scaled data (i.e. those using Likert-type scales). There is significant academic debate about whether the data produced by these scales is ordinal level (data in which the ordering or ranking of responses is possible, but there is no implied equal interval between the scale points) or interval level data (where there are equal intervals between the scale points) (Allen & Seaman, 2007; Greener & Martelli, 2018; Norman, 2010; Westland, 2014). It is common practice in social science research to treat scaled data as interval level (or quasi-ratio) data so that parametric statistics, such as correlations and regressions, can be used in data analysis (Greener & Martelli, 2018). This approach is well established (Norman, 2010) and has been adopted in this study in order to facilitate comparability with previous research.

In order to test the reliability of each set of scaled items which contributed to the measurement of a single construct, Chronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency. The scores for each scale are shown below:

**Table 7.5** *Chronbach's Alpha Scores for Brand Personality Scales*

| | Marc Jacobs | Marks & Spencer | Warehouse | Vera Wang |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trusted Brand (3 items) | 0.832 | 0.794 | 0.885 | 0.891 |
| Sociable Brand (3 items) | 0.698 | 0.620 | 0.785 | 0.694 |
| Exciting Brand (3 items) | 0.756 | 0.870 | 0.778 | 0.730 |
| Sincere Brand (2 items) | 0.457 | 0.587 | 0.630 | 0.725 |

**Table 7.6** *Chronbach's Alpha Scores for Character-Related Scales*

| | Angela | Bridget | Becky |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude to Character (3 items) | 0.709 | 0.849 | 0.818 |
| Self-Character Similarity (3 items) | 0.859 | 0.852 | 0.909 |

The higher the Chronbach's alpha score the more the items in the scale have shared covariance and probably measure the same underlying concept. A score of 0.65 or higher is generally thought to indicate acceptable levels of reliability (Goforth, 2015). Coefficients that are less than 0.5 are usually unacceptable (Goforth, 2015), but lower levels of Cronbach's alpha are frequently reported for scales with few items (Rammstedt & Beierlein, 2014); this may explain why the scores for the Sincere Brand scales are lower, as they consisted of only two items. These scores and their implications for analysis are further discussed in Chapter 11.

New dichotomous variables were created for each of the brands mentioned in the three excerpts and then the open-ended responses to the unprompted recall questions were manually coded to these

variables. Any answer which did not relate to one of the mentioned brands was coded to a “false positives” variable.

Multiple response sets were created for the questions relating to reading habits and the prompted and unprompted recall variables. The Frequencies procedure in SPSS was then used to produce a frequency table for each question on the questionnaire. The Descriptives procedure in SPSS was used to calculate mean scores and standard deviations for those questions which produced scaled data.

In order to test the link between perceived brand personality and character personality, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between each of the character personality traits and brand personality traits relevant to each excerpt. The Pearson correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables. It can take a value between +1 and -1. A value of 0 indicates that there is no association between the two variables; a value greater than 0 indicates a positive association (i.e. as the value of one variable increases, so does the value of the other variable); a value less than 0 (a negative value) indicates a negative association (i.e. as the value of one variable increases, the value of the other variable decreases).

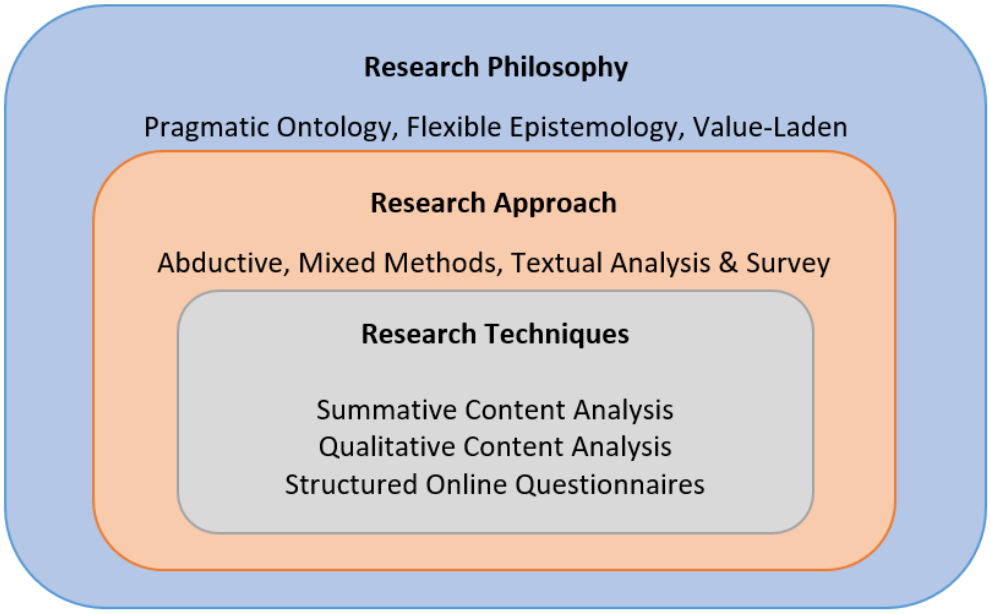
Several character-related factors have been proposed to influence consumers’ attitudes towards placed brands. These factors include consumers’ attitudes towards characters (Avramova et al., 2017b; Russell & Stern, 2006), self-character similarity (Avramova et al., 2017b; Bhatnagar & Wan, 2011) and the perceived fit between characters and brands (Avramova et al., 2017b). A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between brand attitude and these three character-related factors. The brand receiving the highest unaided recall score for each story was identified, then attitude to this brand was used as the dependent variable with the three relevant character-related factors used as the independent variables in the regression.

## 7.5 Summary

The diagram in Figure 7.2 summarises the methodology adopted for this study. A mixed methods approach has been taken, using a combination of textual analysis and structured online surveys.

Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11 present and discuss the findings of each element of the research. Chapter 8 reports on the summative content analysis; Chapter 9 reports on the qualitative content analysis; Chapter 10 reports on the author survey and Chapter 11 reports on the consumer survey.

**Figure 7.2** *Methodology Adopted for this Study (based on Kagioglou et al., 2000)*



# Chapter 8: Results of the Summative Content Analysis

## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the summative content analysis of the chick lit corpus. It addresses two key objectives of the study:

- To establish the extent to which fashion brand names are mentioned in selected novels.
- To critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels.

Several authors have noted the prevalence of brand names in chick lit novels, and in particular their use of fashion brand names (Dorney, 2004; Patterson & Brown, 1999; Van Slooten, 2006). The following analysis identifies the extent to which brand names are mentioned in the novels within the corpus. Comparisons are made with the findings of Friedman's study of US post-war best sellers (Friedman, 1991) as this is the most comprehensive study of brands in novels previously undertaken; however, where appropriate, additional comparisons are made with Stephen Brown's studies of the use of brand names in the *Scruples* novels and *American Psycho* (S. Brown, 1995a, 1995b). In this way, conclusions can be drawn as to whether chick lit novels demonstrate an atypically heavy use of brand names in comparison to other genres of popular fiction, and also whether the pattern of brand name use in terms of product category is significantly different to that found in other genres.

The summative content analysis also identifies which fashion brand names are used most frequently in the chick lit corpus and begins to examine the relationship between fashion brands and characters in the selected novels.

## 8.2 Brand Name Frequency and Variety

In total 1,800,666 words of text were examined across the 19 chick lit novels forming the corpus for this study. Brand names were used 5,811 times within this text, leading to an overall brand name frequency of 32.27 per 10,000 words. Within this a total of 1,278 discrete brand name varieties were found, meaning that each brand appeared an average of 4.55 times within the corpus. On average 7.09 discrete brand names were mentioned per 10,000 words. This data is summarised in Table 8.1 alongside the same data from Friedman's corpus.

It is clear from these headline figures that, on average, chick lit novels exhibit significantly more use of brand names than those in Friedman's corpus; although it should be noted that there are some novels in Friedman's corpus which exhibit similar brand frequency and brand variety measures; for

example *Chocolate Days, Popsicle Weeks* (1970) has a brand name frequency of 26.21 and a brand name variety score of 12.52 (Friedman, 1991). Some caution should be used when making direct comparisons as Friedman chose to exclude local retail establishments and those brand names that were central to the theme of the novel, which would reduce the number of brand names counted in Friedman's survey.

**Table 8.1** *Summary Data*

| | Chick Lit Corpus | Friedman's Corpus |
|---|---|---|
| Words of text examined | 1,800,666 | 2,931,400 |
| Total brand name mentions | 5,811 | 1, 580 |
| Brand name frequency measure | 32.27 | 5.39 |
| Discrete brand name varieties | 1,278 | 507 |
| Average mentions per brand | 4.55 | 3.12 |
| Brand name variety measure | 7.09 | 1.73 |

Previous work by Stephen Brown applied Friedman's classification system to Judith Kranz's *Scruples* novels, and *American Psycho* by Bret Easton-Ellis (S. Brown, 1995a, 1995b). He found that together the two *Scruples* novels had a brand name frequency score of 24.98 and brand name variety score of 10.49. These figures are in the same region as some of the novels in the chick lit sample used in this study. As chick lit is considered to be a development from the sex and shopping novels of the 1970s and 80s (Whelehan, 2009), and brand names are a feature of both genres, it is perhaps unsurprising that they have similar levels of brand name usage. S. Brown contrasts *Scruples* with *American Psycho* which has a brand name frequency score of 142.9 and a brand name variety score of 52.8 (S. Brown, 1995b); both significantly higher than those for *Scruples* or the chick lit corpus. It would therefore appear that whilst chick lit exhibits relatively high levels of brand name use, the levels are in the same region as some other contemporary popular fiction genres, and significantly lower than those of *American Psycho,* which is considered to be the peak of brand name usage in fiction (Billen, 1993; S. Brown, 1995b).

Table 8.2 summarises the data for each of the three series in the study sample. This data indicates that there are some differences between the three series in terms of brand name usage. Surprisingly, the *Shopaholic* series, which is often criticised for its use of brand names (Dorney, 2004; C. A. Wilson, 2012b) has the lowest levels of brand name frequency and variety. These average figures mask some considerable differences between individual novels in each series. For example, in the *Shopaholic* series, the brand name frequencies range from 13.9 in *Shopaholic to the Rescue* (2015) to 39.78 in *Mini-Shopaholic* (2010); whereas in the Bridget Jones series, brand name frequencies range from

23.23 in *Bridget Jones's Baby* (2016) to 54.42 in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* (2013). A full breakdown of the figures by series and individual novel can be found in Appendix I.

**Table 8.2** *Summary Data by Series*

| | Bridget Jones Series | Shopaholic Series | I Heart Series | Friedman's Corpus |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Words of text examined | 290,296 | 850,259 | 660,111 | 2,931,400 |
| Total brand name mentions | 1,078 | 2,331 | 2,402 | 1, 580 |
| Brand name frequency measure | 37.13 | 27.42 | 36.39 | 5.39 |
| Discrete brand name varieties | 366 | 572 | 705 | 507 |
| Average mentions per brand | 2.95 | 4.08 | 3.41 | 3.12 |
| Brand name variety measure | 12.61 | 6.73 | 10.68 | 1.73 |

S. Brown (1995b) notes similar variation in brand name frequencies and varieties in the *Scruples* novels, with *Scruples* (1978) containing significantly more brand references than *Scruples Two* (1992). He suggested that this may be a reflection of the different socio-economic conditions in which they were written, with *Scruples* anticipating the growth period of the 1980s, and *Scruples Two* reflecting the economic austerity of the early 1990s; and contrasts this with Friedman's longitudinal study of the post-war period (1946 – 1974), which found an exponentially increasing incidence of brand name use in popular fiction.

As the corpus used in this study covers a twenty-year period (from 1996 to 2017), it is possible to examine time series data to see if there are any trends or patterns in the use of brand names in the different novels. Figures 8.1 and 8.2 show the variations in brand name frequency and variety respectively.

These figures illustrate some variation in brand name usage throughout each series, but there does not appear to be any pattern to this variation. Some series show a reduction in brand name use after the first novel, whilst others show growth. A comparison with UK GDP growth (Figure 8.3), shows no relationship between economic growth and brand name usage. In fact, *Mini Shopaholic* which was published in 2010 and centres around the financial crisis of 2008-2010, has the highest brand name frequency of the *Shopaholic* series.

**Figure 8.1** *Brand Name Frequency over Time*

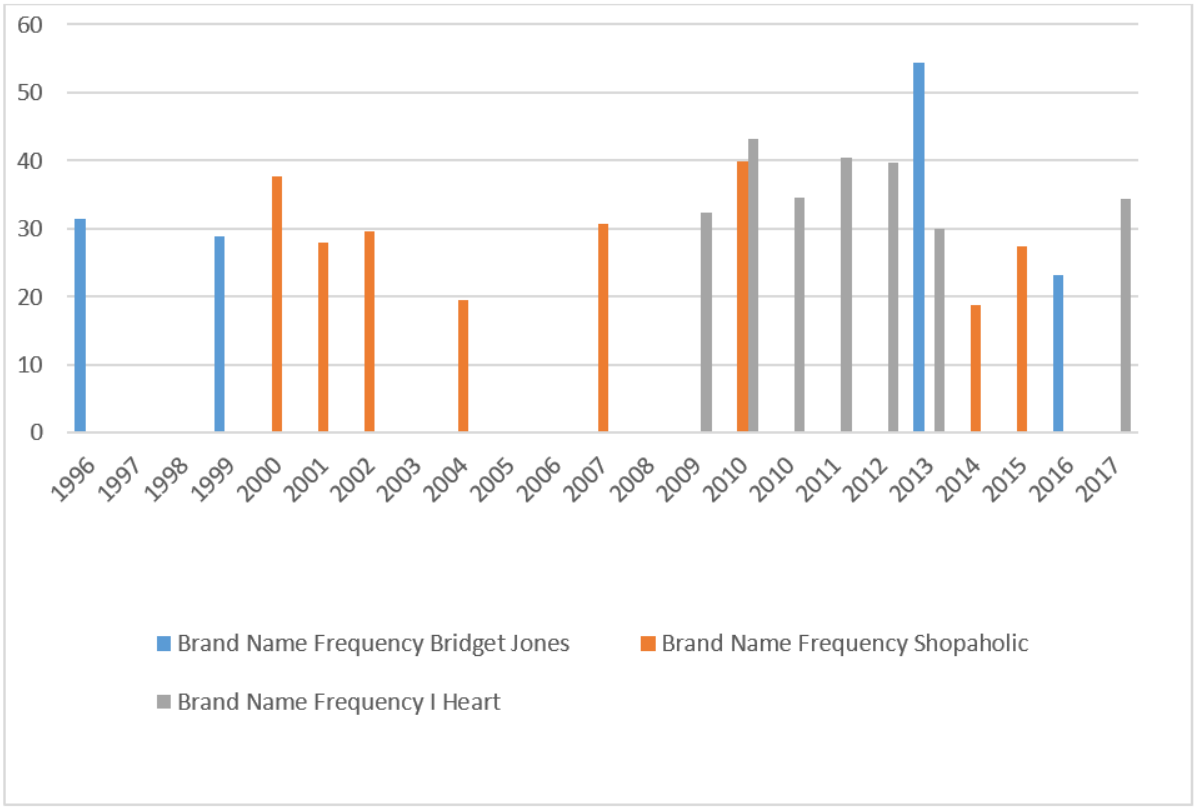



**Figure 8.2** *Brand Name Variety over Time*

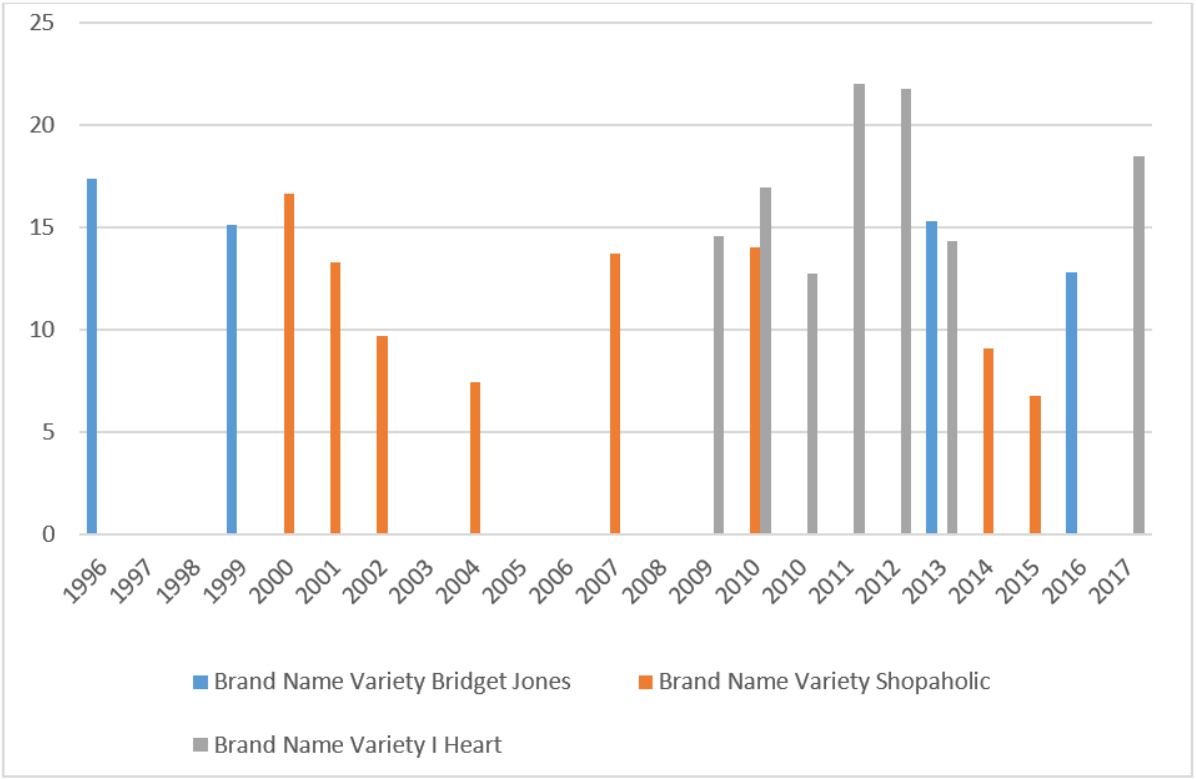
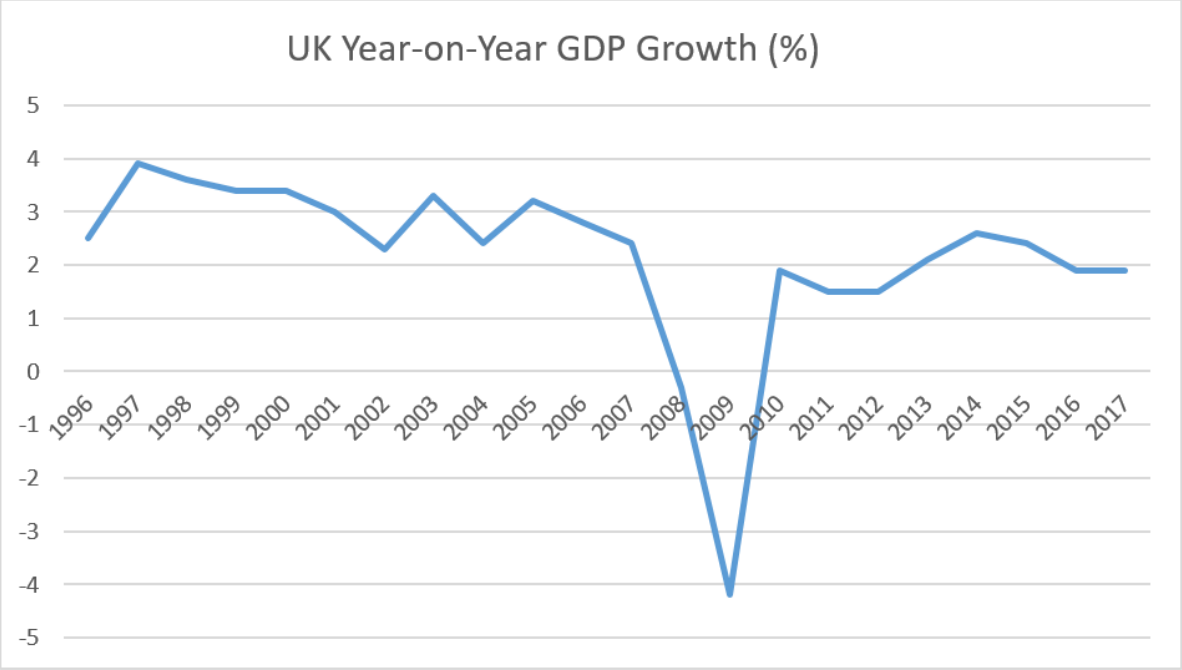


**Figure 8.3** *UK Year-on-Year GDP Growth (Statista, 2020)*




It therefore appears that brand name usage simply varies according to the author's writing style and the characteristics of each story. For example, the high brand name frequency in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* reflects Bridget's new social media and online dating obsessions, and therefore the text is full of references to websites and apps; whilst the relatively low brand name usage in *Shopaholic to the Rescue* reflects Becky's (temporary) loss of interest in shopping.

## 8.3 Brand Name Use by Product Category

Friedman found that certain product categories were more significant than others in terms of brand usage in popular fiction (Friedman, 1991). Table 8.3 classifies the brand names used in each chick lit series by product category and compares these figures with those from Friedman's study.

The comparison shows some significant differences in the types of branded products mentioned in chick lit. In Friedman's study, automobiles stood out as the most significant type of brand name, accounting for nearly 25% of all brands mentioned in his sample, with magazines a strong second, at nearly 12%. He argued that both types of products were high on the value-expressiveness scale and were perceived as "*more conspicuous and important*" than other products in communicating the stereotype of the person who owns or uses the product (Friedman, 1991, p. 32).

**Table 8.3** *Brand Names by Product Type and Series*

| | Bridget Jones Series | Shopaholic Series | I Heart Series | Chick Lit Corpus | Friedman's Corpus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 : Automobiles | 3.0 | 2.2 | 1.1 | 1.7 | 24.7 |
| 2 : Beer, wine and liquors | 2.3 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 6.6 |
| 3 : Building materials and equipment | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| 4 : Business services (financial) | 0.7 | 4.3 | 0.7 | 2.0 | 2.2 |
| 5 : Drugs and remedies | 2.1 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 5.0 |
| 6 : Electronics | 3.9 | 4.0 | 8.5 | 5.4 | 2.6 |
| 7 : Food and food products | 2.8 | 1.5 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 3.0 |
| 8 : Freight shipping companies | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| 9 : Hotels and travel services | 3.4 | 8.1 | 5.5 | 13.1 | 1.4 |
| 10 : Household equipment and supplies | 2.3 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 1.2 | 1.6 |
| 11 : Household furnishings | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 1.0 |
| 12 : Jewellery, optical goods and cameras | 0.4 | 2.8 | 0.9 | 1.5 | 1.4 |
| 13 : Lubricants and fuel | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| 14 : Magazines and other publications | 8.0 | 10.7 | 2.6 | 6.3 | 11.7 |
| 15 : Office equipment and supplies | 0.6 | 1.4 | 0.4 | 0.8 | 2.0 |
| 16 : Retail Stores | 8.7 | 15.9 | 11.9 | 12.0 | 5.1 |
| 17 : Soaps, cleansers and polishes | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.7 |
| 18 : Sporting goods and toys | 6.1 | 1.5 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.9 |
| 19 : Sweets, snacks and soft drinks | 7.5 | 4.5 | 10.4 | 7.0 | 6.7 |
| 20 : Tobacco products | 3.5 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.7 | 3.9 |
| 21 : Toiletries | 1.5 | 2.6 | 3.4 | 2.5 | 6.0 |
| 22 : Wearing apparel | 10.9 | 26.3 | 23.6 | 20.8 | 5.0 |
| 23 : Other | 31.2 | 8.9 | 21.4 | 16.8 | 4.2 |
| | **100.0** | **100.0** | **100.0** | **100.0** | **100.0** |

In the chick lit corpus, automotive brands hardly feature at all, representing just 1.7% of the brands mentioned across all of the chick lit novels. Magazines remain relatively important (6.3%), although this figure is skewed downwards by the low incidence of real magazine brands in the *I Heart* Series, where the protagonist is a magazine writer/editor and therefore fictional magazine titles are used throughout the series. Four categories are significantly more important in the chick lit corpus in comparison to Friedman's study: wearing apparel (20.8% in comparison to 5.0%), hotel and travel services (13.1% in comparison to 1.4%), retail stores (12% in comparison to 5.1%) and "other" (16.8% in comparison to 4.2%). The growth in "other" can be explained in part by the inclusion of local bars and restaurants (which were excluded from Friedman's analysis), and also by the emergence of new media brands as a key element of modern lifestyles (e.g. Google, Facebook and Twitter).

In addition to the 20.8% of the brands mentioned in the chick lit corpus which were related to wearing apparel, a further 8.9% were related to fashion retail and department stores, 2.6% related to beauty, fragrance and hair products and 1.5% related to jewellery, watches and eyewear. Therefore, 33.8% of all of the brand names mentioned in the selected novels could be considered to be fashion related.

The overall frequencies of brand name occurrence in different product categories are similar to that found by S. Brown (1995a) in his study of *Scruples*, with bars, restaurants, hotels and travel services representing the cosmopolitan, aspirational lifestyles portrayed in both sex and shopping novels and chick lit, and retail stores and fashion brands reflecting traditional gender-related preoccupations for women.

## 8.4 Frequently Cited Brand Names

Table 8.4 lists the 25 most frequently mentioned brand name varieties in each of the chick lit series and compares this with the 25 most frequently cited names in Friedman's corpus.

**Table 8.4** *25 Most Frequently Mentioned Brand Name Varieties in Each Series*

| | Bridget Jones Series | Shopaholic Series | I Heart Series | Friedman's Corpus |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Twitter | The Plaza Hotel | Apple | Coca Cola |
| 2 | Apple | Barneys | Marc Jacobs | Cadillac |
| 3 | Silk Cut | BlackBerry | Christian Louboutin | Ford |
| 4 | Coca-Cola | Vogue | BlackBerry | Buick |
| 5 | Botox | Visa | Starbucks | Kleenex |
| 6 | Microsoft | Tiffany | Coca-Cola | Life Magazine |
| 7 | 192 | Prada | Facebook | Chevrolet |
| 8 | Cadbury's | Google | Bloomingdale's | Vogue Magazine |
| 9 | Independent | Nestlé | Tiffany | Pepsi Cola |
| 10 | Marks & Spencer | Financial Times | Marks & Spencer | Levis Jeans |
| 11 | Nicorette | eBay | Chanel | General Motors Corp. |
| 12 | Rotary Club | Harrods | M&M's | Woolworth's (5 & 10) |
| 13 | Zumba | Armani | Converse | Scotch Tape |
| 14 | Facebook | Chanel | Ikea | Polaroid |
| 15 | Grand Marnier | Marc Jacobs | Jimmy Choo | Playboy Magazine |
| 16 | Red Bull | Apple | Metro | Plymouth |
| 17 | Nestlé | Miu Miu | Yves Saint Laurent | Volkswagen |
| 18 | Net-A-Porter | YouTube | MAC | Budweiser Beer |
| 19 | Grazia | Gucci | McDonald's | Saks Fifth Avenue Store |
| 20 | Match.com | Vera Wang | Botox | Time Magazine |
| 21 | The Electric Bar | Botox | Topshop | Tiffany Jewellers |
| 22 | BMW | Starbucks | Google | MG |
| 23 | Hello! | Christian Dior | The Venetian | Alka Seltzer |
| 24 | John Lewis | Missoni | Ben & Jerry's | CBS Network |
| 25 | OkCupid | Harvey Nichols | Disney | Paramount Studios |

Some of the brands which were frequently used in Friedman's sample are also frequently used in the chick lit novels, e.g. Coca-Cola, Vogue Magazine and Tiffany; this indicates the enduring popularity of

these brands. There are also some significant new brands in the chick lit corpus, these include Apple, Blackberry, Google, Facebook and Twitter. These brands are probably more a reflection of twenty-first century lifestyles, than a specific feature of chick lit.

Only one automotive brand appears in the top 25 lists of the chick lit corpus (BMW in the *Bridget Jones* series), whereas there were multiple automobile brands in Friedman's top 25; instead, the chick lit lists feature more retail stores and fashion brands.

There are some differences between brands used in the three chick lit series. The *Shopaholic* and *I Heart* series have several frequently mentioned brands in common (Apple, Blackberry, Starbucks, Google, Tiffany, Chanel, Marc Jacobs), and more fashion brands in their top 25; whereas the *Bridget Jones* brands are much less fashion oriented. The only brand which is common across the top 25 of all three chick lit series is Botox, which underlines the chick lit heroine's pre-occupation with appearance (Smith, 2008).

In common with Friedman's sample, the most frequently used brand names span both expensive, high-end tastes (Harrods, Net-A-Porter, Prada, Armani, Gucci, Christian Louboutin, etc.) as well as more inexpensive options (Marks & Spencer, John Lewis, Topshop, Converse, etc.).

Table 8.5 presents an aggregate list of the 25 most frequently mentioned brand name varieties across all of the books in the chick lit corpus.

Overall, the most frequently mentioned brands are Apple and Blackberry, which reflect the ubiquity of smart phones and other electronic gadgets in modern life. The remainder of the list (as with each individual series) is mostly a mix of fashion brands, retail stores, media brands and publications.

Although the Plaza Hotel in New York is the fifth most mentioned brand name in the corpus, it should be noted that the high frequency is almost entirely attributable to *Shopaholic Ties the Knot* where the brand is mentioned 84 times, as it is the venue for Becky and Luke's New York 'wedding'.

**Table 8.5** *25 Most Frequently Mentioned Brand Names Varieties in the Chick Lit Corpus*

| | Variety | Number of books in which the variety appears | Frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Apple | 15 | 183 |
| 2 | Blackberry | 8 | 116 |
| 3 | Twitter | 4 | 107 |
| 4 | Marc Jacobs | 12 | 91 |
| 5 | The Plaza Hotel | 4 | 87 |
| 6 | Barney's | 9 | 84 |
| 7 | Tiffany | 14 | 77 |
| 8 | Vogue | 15 | 75 |
| 9 | Coca Cola | 13 | 73 |
| 10 | Starbucks | 12 | 72 |
| 11 | Christian Louboutin | 11 | 69 |
| 12 | Facebook | 10 | 57 |
| 13 | Google | 11 | 56 |
| 14 | Marks & Spencer | 14 | 55 |
| 15 | Chanel | 14 | 54 |
| 16 | Visa | 7 | 53 |
| 17 | Prada | 11 | 50 |
| 18 | Botox | 9 | 49 |
| 19 | Nestlé | 12 | 49 |
| 20 | Ritz Hotel London | 4 | 40 |
| 21 | Bloomingdale's | 10 | 40 |
| 22 | Disney | 15 | 35 |
| 23 | Jimmy Choo | 12 | 32 |
| 24 | Harrods | 8 | 31 |
| 25 | Financial Times | 5 | 30 |

## 8.5 Fashion Brands in the Chick Lit Corpus

### 8.5.1 Frequently Cited Apparel Brand Names

As previously discussed, apparel brands form the biggest group of brand names used in the chick lit corpus, representing 20.8% of all brands mentioned. Friedman (1991) suggested that automobile brands (the largest group in his study) were used to facilitate symbolic communication in the novels in his sample, and it seems reasonable to assume that fashion apparel brands perform the same function in chick lit novels.

Table 8.6 lists the 25 most frequently mentioned apparel brand names in the chick list corpus. Marc Jacobs and Christian Louboutin top this list, but both brands appear only in the *Shopaholic* and *I Heart* series. The next three brands, Prada, Chanel and Jimmy Choo appear in all three series. The list is dominated by designer and luxury brands which would normally be associated with a hyper-affluent lifestyle, even though the typical chick lit heroine is supposed to be a middle-class graduate in the early stages of her career, but there are some more accessible brands on the list (e.g. Converse, Ugg, Marks & Spencer and Topshop).

**Table 8.6** *25 Most Frequently Mentioned Apparel Brand Names Varieties in the Chick Lit Corpus*

| | Variety | Frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Marc Jacobs | 85 |
| 2 | Christian Louboutin | 65 |
| 3 | Prada | 46 |
| 4 | Chanel | 31 |
| 5 | Jimmy Choo | 31 |
| 6 | Miu Miu | 26 |
| 7 | Hermès | 25 |
| 8 | Vera Wang | 25 |
| 9 | Converse | 23 |
| 10 | Armani | 20 |
| 11 | Gucci | 20 |
| 12 | Yves Saint Laurent | 19 |
| 13 | Dolce & Gabbana | 18 |
| 14 | Marks & Spencer | 16 |
| 15 | Ugg | 16 |
| 16 | Calvin Klein | 14 |
| 17 | Christian Dior | 14 |
| 18 | Donna Karan | 14 |
| 19 | Alexander Wang | 13 |
| 20 | Ralph Lauren | 13 |
| 21 | Topshop | 13 |
| 22 | Whistles | 13 |
| 23 | Balenciaga | 12 |
| 24 | Temperley | 12 |
| 25 | Splendid | 11 |

Table 8.7 lists the most frequently used apparel brands by series. There are some differences in the types of apparel brand used most frequently between the three series. The *Bridget Jones* series uses a mixture of designer, premium and high street brands. It includes several lingerie brands in its top 25, including Wonderbra, La Perla, Agent Provocateur and Gossard, plus a childrenswear brand (I Love Gorgeous). In contrast, the most frequently mentioned apparel brands in the *Shopaholic* series are almost all high-end designer and luxury brands. The only exception is Millets, which is used for comedic purposes in *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic* (Becky thinks that she is a victim of credit card fraud because there is a purchase from Millets on her credit card statement). The *Shopaholic* list also includes some brands which specialise in handbags and accessories (Kate Spade and Lulu Guinness). The *I Heart* series uses more high-end designer brands than Bridget Jones, but also includes some premium and high street brands. Its top 25 brands include several specialist footwear brands (Christian Louboutin, Converse, Jimmy Choo, Ugg, Giuseppe Zanotti and Havaianas) as well as a lingerie brand (Victoria's Secret).

**Table 8.7** *Most Frequently Mentioned Apparel Brand Names Varieties by Series*

| | Bridget Jones Series | Shopaholic Series | I Heart Series |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Country Casuals | Prada | Marc Jacobs |
| 2 | Calvin Klein | Marc Jacobs | Christian Louboutin |
| 3 | Wonderbra | Miu Miu | Converse |
| 4 | Jaeger | Vera Wang | Jimmy Choo |
| 5 | La Perla | Armani | Chanel |
| 6 | Whistles | Chanel | Hermès |
| 7 | Agent Provocateur | Christian Dior | Ugg |
| 8 | H&M | Gucci | Marks & Spencer |
| 9 | Pied à Terre | Dolce & Gabbana | Splendid |
| 10 | Prada | Donna Karan | Hervé Léger |
| 11 | Agnès B | Hermès | Yves Saint Laurent |
| 12 | Donna Karan (DKNY) | Jimmy Choo | American Apparel |
| 13 | Gossard Glossies | Ralph Lauren | Alexander Wang |
| 14 | ILoveGorgeous | Temperley | Topshop |
| 15 | J Crew | Balenciaga | Victoria's Secret |
| 16 | Jigsaw | Barbour | Balmain |
| 17 | Joseph | Kate Spade | Diane von Furstenberg |
| 18 | Kookaï | Lulu Guinness | Miu Miu |
| 19 | Laura Ashley | Missoni | Phillip Lim |
| 20 | Michael Kors | Whistles | Giuseppe Zanotti |
| 21 | Nicole Farhi | Luella | Havaianas |
| 22 | Ralph Lauren | Millets | Marchesa |
| 23 | Voyage | Valentino | Prada |
| 24 | Warehouse | Yves Saint Laurent | Vera Wang |
| 25 | Zara | * | ** |

* Burberry, Calvin Klein, Christian Louboutin, Jigsaw, Louis Vuitton, Versace, Vivienne Westwood

** Abercrombie & Fitch, BCBG, Brown Bag, Gucci, Lanvin, Nanette Lepore, Paul & Joe, Primark

To some extent, the different types of apparel brand names reflect the different preoccupations of the novels' protagonists. Bridget Jones is focused on finding a romantic partner and this could be reflected in the frequency of lingerie brand mentions. Whilst Country Casuals and Jaeger feature highly in the Bridget Jones list, these refer to descriptions of Bridget's mother and her friends, rather than to Bridget's tastes. Becky's main interest is shopping, particularly for high end designer brands and the *Shopaholic* list is dominated by these. Whilst Angela also favours designer brands, she is particularly interested in shoes, which is reflected in the number of footwear brands in the *I Heart* list.

### 8.5.2 Association of Fashion Brand Names with Products

In total, 1301 brand names are mentioned in association with apparel products in the chick lit corpus; this does not include mentions of fashion stores but does include store brands that are associated with a particular item of wearing apparel (e.g. a pair of Topshop jeans). Some brands names are just mentioned generally in an apparel context (e.g. "she was wearing head-to-toe Armani"), but most are associated with a particular item of clothing (e.g. "she wore a Barbour jacket"). Table 8.8 identifies the number of branded items mentioned in each apparel category.

**Table 8.8** *Frequency of Branded Wearing Apparel in the Chick Lit Corpus – by Product Type*

| | Number of books in which branded items appear | Frequency of occurrence of branded items |
|---|---|---|
| Total Branded Wearing Apparel (including non-specified items) | 19 | 1301 |
| Accessories | 10 | 41 |
| Bags & Luggage | 17 | 181 |
| Childrenswear | 12 | 33 |
| Dresses | 18 | 224 |
| Footwear | 18 | 274 |
| Jackets & Coats | 15 | 80 |
| Lingerie & Hosiery | 10 | 25 |
| Skirts | 10 | 25 |
| Sportswear | 7 | 16 |
| Suits | 12 | 39 |
| Swimwear | 5 | 6 |
| Tops & Knitwear | 16 | 89 |
| Trousers & Jeans | 18 | 62 |

The three biggest categories are footwear (274 mentions), dresses (224 mentions) and bags and luggage (181 mentions). Tables 8.9, 8.10 and 8.11 list the top 10 brand names associated with each of these categories. In each case the list is dominated by designer and luxury brands. Some brands are associated with more than one product category (e.g. Marc Jacobs appears on both the bag and dress lists, whilst Prada appears on both the footwear and bag lists).

**Table 8.9** *Top 10 Footwear Brands in the Chick Lit Corpus*

| | Variety | Frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Christian Louboutin | 65 |
| 2 | Jimmy Choo | 31 |
| 3 | Converse | 23 |
| 4 | Prada | 17 |
| 5 | Ugg | 15 |
| 6 | Yves Saint Laurent | 12 |
| 7 | Manolo Blahnik | 8 |
| 8 | Giuseppe Zanotti | 7 |
| 9 | Havaianas | 7 |
| 10 | Miu Miu | 7 |

**Table 8.10** *Top 10 Dress Brands in the Chick Lit Corpus*

| | Variety | Frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Vera Wang | 22 |
| 2 | Marc Jacobs | 11 |
| 3 | Temperley | 10 |
| 4 | Hervé Léger | 9 |
| 5 | Valentino | 7 |
| 6 | Diane von Furstenberg | 6 |
| 7 | Marchesa | 6 |
| 8 | Phillip Lim | 6 |
| 9 | Richard Tyler | 6 |
| 10 | Splendid | 6 |

**Table 8.11** *Top 10 Bag & Luggage Brands in the Chick Lit Corpus*

| | Variety | Frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Marc Jacobs | 55 |
| 2 | Hermès | 22 |
| 3 | Chanel | 11 |
| 4 | Balenciaga | 8 |
| 5 | Luella | 8 |
| 6 | Alexander Wang | 7 |
| 7 | Mulberry | 6 |
| 8 | Prada | 6 |
| 9 | Big/Medium/Little Brown Bag | 5 |
| 10 | Louis Vuitton | 5 |

### 8.5.3 Retail Stores

In addition to brand names associated with apparel products, retail stores are frequently mentioned in chick lit (12% of brand occurrences). Although some of these are supermarkets, etc., the majority are department stores and fashion stores.

Table 8.12 summarises the number of stores of each type which are mentioned in the chick lit corpus.

**Table 8.12** *Frequency of Retail Store Brands in the Chick Lit Corpus – by Store Type*

| | Number of books in which branded items appear | Frequency of occurrence of branded items |
|---|---|---|
| Total Retail Stores (including non-specified items) | 19 | 751 |
| Department Stores | 19 | 291 |
| Fashion Stores | 19 | 227 |

Table 8.13 identifies the top 10 department store brands mentioned in the chick lit corpus. There is a mixture of high-end New York and London stores, such as Barneys, Saks, Harvey Nichols and Harrods, and more accessible department stores such as Macy's, John Lewis and Debenhams. Although all of the chick lit novels in the corpus are written by British authors and feature British protagonists, many

of the stories are set in the USA, particularly in New York and Los Angeles, so there is a mixture of UK and US retailers.

**Table 8.13** *Top 10 Department Store Brands in the Chick Lit Corpus*

| | Variety | Frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Barneys | 80 |
| 2 | Bloomingdale's | 40 |
| 3 | Harrods | 31 |
| 4 | Harvey Nichols | 23 |
| 5 | John Lewis | 19 |
| 6 | Saks | 17 |
| 7 | Selfridges | 16 |
| 8 | Debenhams | 10 |
| 9 | Liberty | 8 |
| 10 | Macy's | 8 |

Table 8.14 lists the top 10 fashion store brands mentioned in the chick lit corpus. Many of these brands also feature in the lists of top apparel brand names, but in this case, they are mentioned in the context of a store, rather than an item of fashion apparel. For example, "I went to Topshop" would be coded as a fashion store, whereas "I wore my favourite Topshop jeans" would be coded as an apparel brand.

Again, there is a mix of high-end stores (e.g. Tiffany, Net-A-Porter, Vera Wang) and high street stores (e.g. Topshop, Gap and Marks & Spencer).

**Table 8.14** *Top 10 Fashion Store Brands in the Chick Lit Corpus*

| | Variety | Frequency of occurrence |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tiffany | 42 |
| 2 | Net-A-Porter | 11 |
| 3 | Topshop | 10 |
| 4 | L K Bennett | 9 |
| 5 | Sephora | 9 |
| 6 | Gap | 7 |
| 7 | Fred Segal | 5 |
| 8 | Marc Jacobs | 5 |
| 9 | Marks & Spencer | 5 |
| 10 | Vera Wang | 5 |

It should be noted that whilst Marks & Spencer was mentioned 55 times in total in the corpus, only 5 of these mentions were in the specific context of a fashion retail store. Other mentions were in the context of food retailing, or in association with particular apparel items.

## 8.6 Association of Fashion Brands with Characters

By coding brands to case nodes in NVivo, it is possible to examine the brands associated with particular characters or groups of characters in the corpus. In each instance, any fashion-related brand (including

retail stores, apparel, cosmetics, perfume, eyewear and jewellery) directly associated with a character was coded to the character's case node. This included items that the character desired, purchased, wore or received as a gift.

### 8.6.1 The Protagonists

All of the novels in the corpus are written in a first-person "confessional" style (Patterson & Brown, 1999). The protagonist is involved in every scene, the reader sees everything (including other characters) from the protagonist's perspective and the reader has access to the protagonist's inner thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the protagonist has the most developed character and tends to have the highest number of brand associations.

#### *8.6.1.1 Bridget Jones*

Bridget Jones is the prototypical chick lit heroine. In an introduction to a 2016 edition of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Caitlin Moran describes Bridget as "*a single, slightly overweight, boozy, smoking, self-help-book-addicted English graduate*" (Moran, 2016, p. 3). In the early books, Bridget obsessively monitors her weight and counts cigarettes, alcohol units and calories. She is on a constant mission to improve her life and get a boyfriend. The success of *Bridget Jones's Diary* is often attributed to the way that the character reflected the lives of real young women in the 1990s, however Moore (2013) describes Bridget as: "*vapid, consumerist and self-obsessed*."

As previously noted, whilst the *Bridget Jones* series has the highest brand frequency and brand variety scores within the chick lit corpus, it is not a particularly fashion-oriented series. Only 10.9% of the brands mentioned in the series are associated with apparel, and only 8.7% with retail stores (of any kind). This compares with averages of 20.8% and 12.0% respectively for the corpus as a whole.

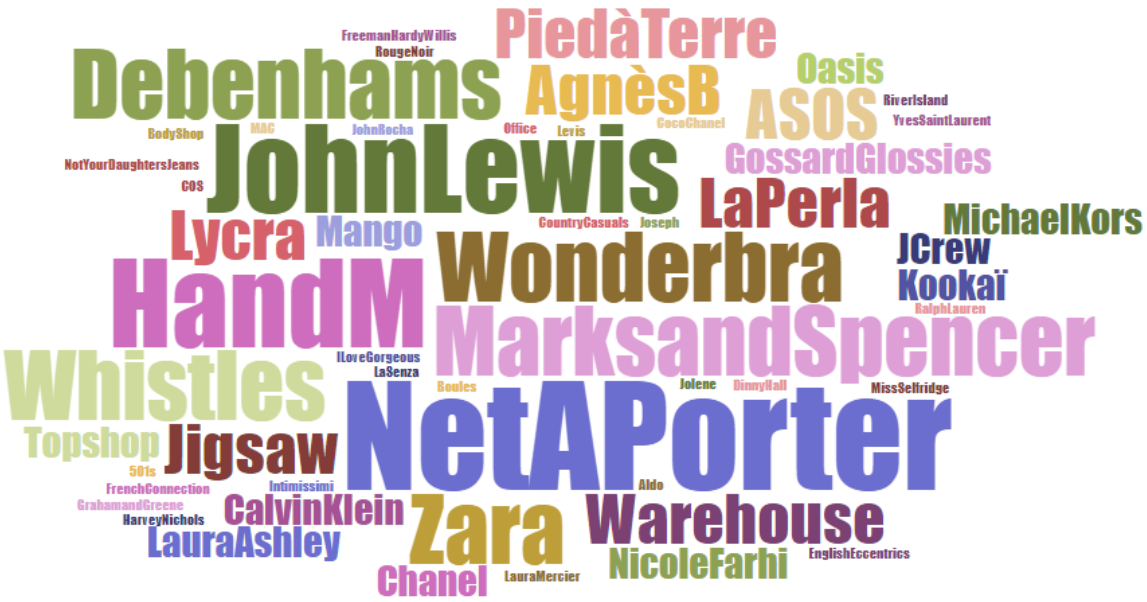
Across the four books in the *Bridget Jones* series, the character of Bridget Jones was directly associated with 108 fashion-related brand occurrences. Figure 8.4 illustrates these brand associations in a word cloud.

The strongest association is with Net-a-Porter (6 mentions). Bridget uses Net-a-Porter in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, when she is an affluent widow and finally has her weight under control. Net-a-Porter describes its average customer as age 38 (66% are married, 4% have children), working in finance, medicine, fashion or marketing; with an annual income of £119,000. She takes 9 vacations a year, spends on average £6,800pa on fashion and describes her style as: classic, sophisticated, contemporary and elegant (Yoox Net-A-Porter, 2015). This description doesn't really fit with the younger character in the first two Bridget Jones books, who mostly shops on the high street, but is closer to the character who appears in the final two books, where Bridget is either an established 43-

year-old TV producer or an affluent 51-year-old widow with two young children – a character that Moore (2013) describes as "*more espresso martini than chardonnay*".

Most of the other key associations for Bridget are with high street stores (H&M and John Lewis – each mentioned 5 times; Marks & Spencer, Debenhams, Whistles and Zara – each mentioned 4 times) and Wonderbra (mentioned 4 times). The remainder are a mix of high street and premium brands.

**Figure 8.4** *Bridget's Fashion Brands*



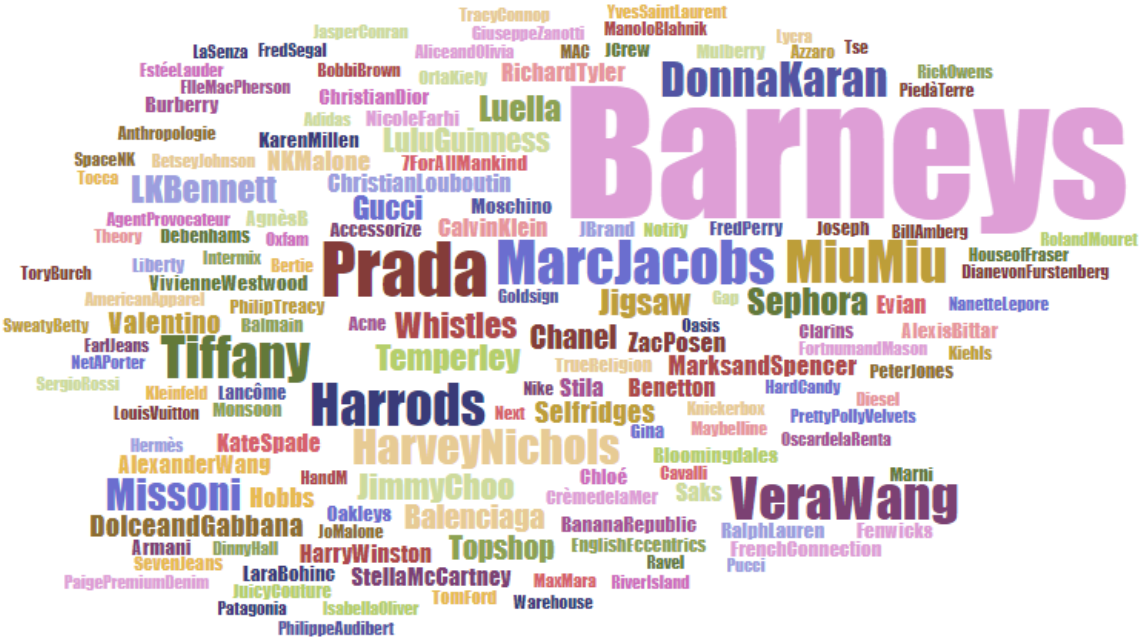

*8.6.1.2 Becky Bloomwood*

Becky Bloomwood is the protagonist of the *Shopaholic* series. Unlike Bridget, Becky doesn't obsess about improving her appearance. Dorney (2004 p. 14) observes that Becky "*occasionally worries about her career and her relationship with boyfriend Luke (she never worries about her weight, or whether she is attractive)*". Her defining feature as a character is her love of shopping, particularly (but not exclusively) for fashion items, and as a result, the character often appears to be shallow and irresponsible.

Venetia, the antagonist in *Shopaholic & Baby*, describes Becky as a "*mindless, consumer little…girlie…. she has no depth! She has no brain! All she cares about is her shopping and her clothes…*"(Kinsella, 2007). Luke, Becky's husband responds by saying "*Becky's instincts match no one else's. Becky has ideas no one else has. Her mind goes to places no one else's does…Yes, she shops. Yes, she does crazy things. But she makes me laugh. She makes me enjoy life…She's brave. She puts other people before herself."* (Kinsella, 2007)

Across the eight books in the *Shopaholic* series, the character of Becky Bloomwood (Brandon) was directly associated with 454 fashion-related brand occurrences. Figure 8.5 illustrates these brand associations in a word cloud.

**Figure 8.5** *Becky's Fashion Brands*




The strongest association is with Barneys (64 mentions). It is perhaps unsurprising that the "shopaholic" is most strongly associated with a retail store. Becky first visits the store when she is on holiday in New York, but later gets a job there as a personal shopper.

Barneys was a luxury department store chain based in New York. It was aimed at younger, urban, sophisticated consumers, selling high-fashion luxury and designer brands. It had a reputation for championing emerging brands and offering exclusive ranges that weren't available elsewhere. Former creative director of Barneys, Simon Doonan described the store as *"an axiom for hip consumerism; if a character in a movie needs to look upscale and trendy, they dress him from Barneys, and then shove a Barneys bag into his hand*"(Doonan, 1998, p. 116)

The next brand most frequently associated with Becky is Prada. The Prada Group describe the brand as "*synonymous with avant-garde style….[its] fashion transcends the product: it is the translation of the conceptual into a universe that becomes a point of reference for those who love to experiment, defying conventions*." (Prada Group, 2020).

Both Barneys and Prada suggest a character who is knowledgeable about fashion and happy to be experimental and avant-garde, rather than simply following trends.

The remaining brands strongly associated with Becky are a mixture of designer brands (Marc Jacobs, Miu Miu, Vera Wang) and upmarket retail brands (Harrods, Tiffany, Harvey Nichols). There are a few high street brands in her list of associations (e.g. Topshop, Marks & Spencer) but these are significantly outnumbered and outweighed by designer and premium brands.

*8.6.1.3 Angela Clark*

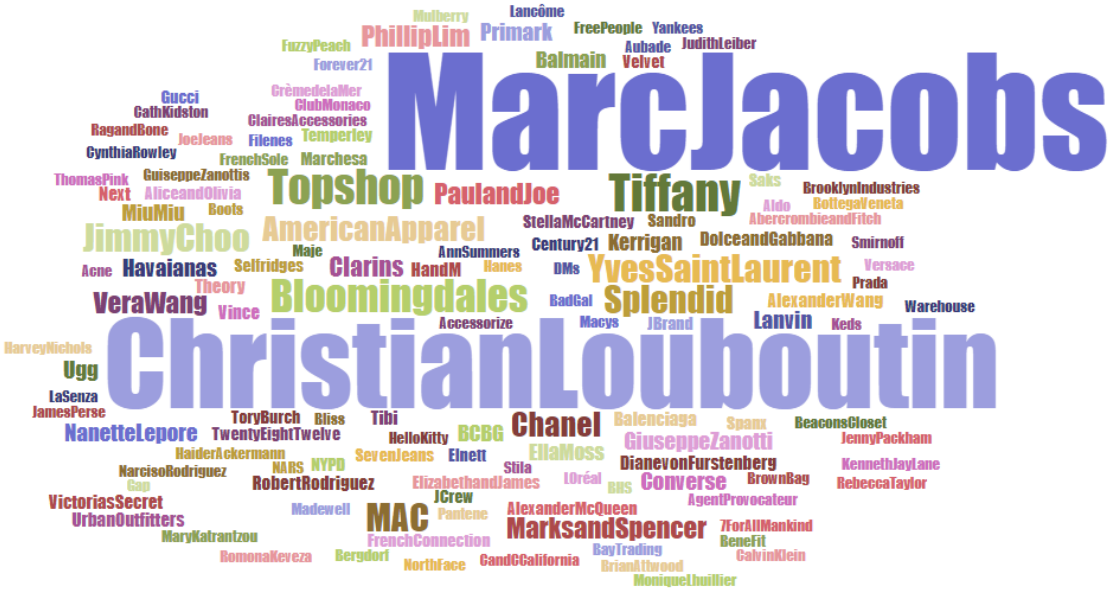
Angela Clark is the protagonist of the *I Heart* series. She is described by the author as "*socially and physically awkward*"; she struggles to ask for what she wants and prefers to avoid conflict; however, she is hardworking, romantic and loyal to her friends (Kelk, 2017b, p. 359). A blogger and fan of the series describes her as:

> *"…probably the most relatable character I have ever come across in a book. Sometimes she has absolutely no idea what she's doing, what she wants or where she's going. She's very, very real. She sometimes forgets to wash her hair, drinks like a fish, eats M&M's like they're going out of style.... But she's also witty, funny as hell, and you just want to be her best friend."* (May, 2017)

Despite being very "real", over the course of the series Angela develops from being a part-time blogger, to conceiving, launching and editing an international women's magazine; and also manages to marry a rock star along the way!

Across the seven books in the *I Heart* series the character of Angela was directly associated with 559 fashion-related brand occurrences. Figure 8.6 illustrates these brand associations in a word cloud.

**Figure 8.6** *Angela's Fashion Brands*



The two strongest associations for Angela are Marc Jacobs (64 mentions) and Christian Louboutin (48 mentions). Marc Jacobs is a brand founded in New York and now owned by luxury group LVMH. It is described as:

> "*Finding the perfect balance between tradition and innovation, highlighting Jacobs' exuberant creativity…Part of a generation that's conscious of the world around it, sensitive to humanitarianism and social entrepreneurship, Marc Jacobs has made its mark as rebellious, unpredictable, original, unique, and authentic all at the same time."* (LVMH, n.d.)

Meanwhile Christian Louboutin is a footwear brand famous for its distinctive red soles and creative designs. Louboutin has been quoted as saying:

> *"I'll do shoes for the lady who lunches, but it would be, like, a really nasty lunch, talking about men…but where I draw the line, what I absolutely won't do, is the lady who plays bridge in the afternoon!"* (Collins, 2011)

Both brands are designer brands, aimed at affluent, fashion-conscious customers, which stress their creativity, originality and rebelliousness. The Marc Jacobs brand is strongly associated with New York and this association is used in the books to reflect Angela's reinvention as a New Yorker, whilst Angela's obsession with designer footwear is reflected by her preference for Louboutins.

### 8.6.2 The Romantic Heroes

Each of the chick lit series in the corpus features a romantic "hero" who eventually marries the protagonist. It has been argued that men in chick lit tend to be relegated to a background role (Harzewski, 2006, 2011); however the summative textual analysis suggests otherwise. In each of the series studied, the romantic hero's name features in the top four words used across the series. 'Mark' is the fourth most commonly used word in the Bridget Jones series, accounting for 0.59% of words used, after 'just', 'like' and 'going'. 'Luke' is the most commonly used word in the Shopaholic series, accounting for 1.14% of all words used; and 'Alex' is the fourth most commonly used word in the I Heart series, accounting for 0.70% of all words used, after 'just', 'Jenny' and 'back'. This suggests that the romantic hero, and thus the romance plot, is a lot more important than previously suggested in chick lit.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of focus on the male leads in terms of the brands associated with them in the text. Brands are rarely used to characterise male characters and where brands are used in conjunction with male characters, they often serve to simply communicate and reinforce a character stereotype.

All three of the romantic leads in the series studied share some similarities. They are all physically attractive and successful in their respective fields. They are all more established in their careers and

more affluent than the protagonists; and they all act as a stable and sensible foil to the slightly neurotic heroines.

#### *8.6.2.1 Mark Darcy*

Mark Darcy is the main male romantic hero in the *Bridget Jones* series. He is a rich, London-based barrister, specialising in human rights issues. His character is portrayed as gentlemanly, reserved and principled, but also a little awkward and stiff. Bridget originally labels him as "*snooty*" (Fielding, 1996, p. 16). Mark does not really have any fashion-related brands associated with him in the Bridget Jones books. The only time that his clothing has a brand association is when it is related to his favourite football team (Newcastle United); he is once described as wearing a Newcastle United tee-shirt, and there are three references to his Newcastle United boxer shorts (given to him by Bridget). This association is a little out-of-step with other descriptions of him in the novels but serves to add some quirks and depth to the character.

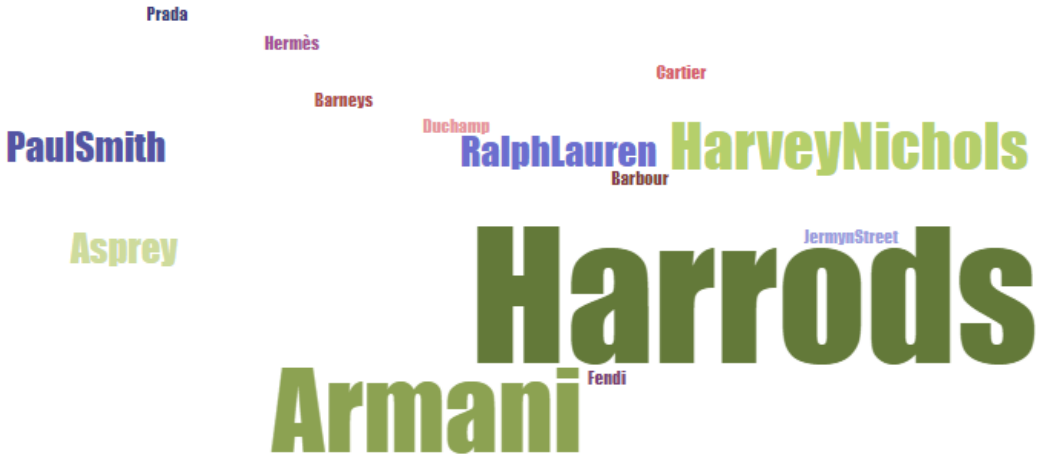
#### *8.6.2.2 Luke Brandon*

Luke Brandon is the hero in the *Shopaholic* series. He owns a financial PR company (Brandon Communications) and is described as being a millionaire (his net worth in the first book is £10m). His attention is always on his Blackberry and his focus throughout the series is on his career (often seeming to put this before Becky's needs).

Dorney (2004 p.18) notes that Luke is "*always immaculately dressed in designer names*", but that he never seems to go to shopping (which isn't entirely true, as one of the first times he interacts with Becky is when he asks her to accompany him to Harrods to help him buy some luggage). Dorney suggests that appearance is important to Luke because of his profession, and notes that he is "*driven by work*" whilst Becky's jobs are "*merely a means to more lipstick and another pair of shoes*" (Dorney, 2004, p. 18).

Luke is directly associated with 30 fashion-related brand mentions in the text of the *Shopaholic* books. All of the brands are either upmarket department stores or luxury and designer brands, consistent with a character of a rich businessman.

**Figure 8.7** *Fashion Brands Associated with Luke Brandon (Shopaholic Series)*




*8.6.2.3 Alex Reid*

Alex Reid is the hero in the *I Heart* series. He is the lead singer of a New York-based indie band. The 26 fashion-related brand mentions associated with him in the text reinforce this character, with Converse sneakers, Ray-Ban sunglasses, a Brooklyn Industries parka and hair that has been 'artfully messed' with Tigi Bed Head. He is mostly described as wearing generic skinny jeans and old tee-shirts, e.g. *"…a pair of black jeans and an un-ironed Kellogg's Corn Flakes T-shirt hanging from his wide shoulders…"* (Kelk, 2010a, p. 157); but is occasionally pictured in a designer suit, hence the associations with Dior and Chanel.

**Figure 8.8** *Fashion Brands Associated with Alex Reid (I Heart Series)*

## 8.6.3 The Best Friends

In chick lit, the protagonists are often geographically separated from their nuclear family. Instead, friends provide the protagonist with emotional support. Relationships with friends in chick lit are often as important as romantic relationships (Mabry, 2006).

*8.6.3.1 Bridget Jones' 'Urban Family'*

Bridget Jones has a group of friends that form her "urban family": Magda, Jude, Sharon and Tom.

Magda is a former commodities broker, who is married with children from the beginning of the series. She often appears to be stressed by her children and adulterous husband. Jude works in the city and is successful at work, but desperate to be loved. She shares Bridget's addiction to self-help books and has an on-off relationship with her commitment phobic boyfriend. Sharon is an ardent feminist who believes that men are the enemy but is frequently in a relationship. Tom is Bridget's gay male friend who has similar insecurities and relationship issues to the women in the group.

Bridget's female friends, particularly Magda and Jude, appear to be more affluent and fashion-oriented than Bridget herself. They are associated mainly with high-end and designer brands and often give Bridget advice on what to wear or lend her clothing. There are no fashion brands mentioned in association with Tom.

**Figure 8.9** *Fashion Brands Associated with Bridget's Friends (Magda, Jude & Sharon)*

*8.6.3.2 Suze Cleath-Stuart*

Becky's best friend is Suze. They met on a press trip when Becky was a financial journalist and Suze was briefly working in PR for Brandon Communications; later Suze invites Becky to become her flatmate. Suze shares Becky's love of clothes and shopping but does not have Becky's financial problems because she comes from a very affluent family. Suze is generous with money and enables Becky's shopping habit at the beginning of the series by subsidising her rent. Suze subsequently marries her cousin Tarquin, who is an aristocratic multi-millionaire.

The brands associated with Suze in the text largely reflect her affluent background and role as a wife of a member of the British upper classes.

**Figure 8.10** *Fashion Brands Associated with Becky's Best Friend (Suze)*

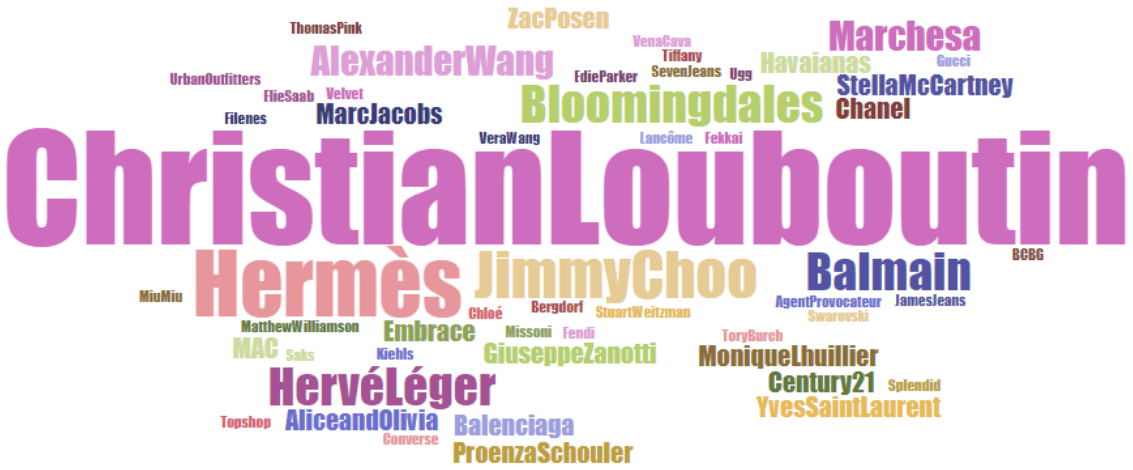
*8.6.3.3 Jenny Lopez*

Angela's best friend is Jenny Lopez. They meet when Angela flees to New York after discovering that her fiancé has been cheating. Jenny is the concierge at the hotel that Angela chooses and takes Angela under her wing. Initially, she plays a fairy godmother role, acting as an amateur psychologist and overseeing Angela's makeover; however, it soon becomes clear that Jenny has issues of her own. Throughout the *I Heart* series, Jenny is a larger-than-life character, she is loud, brash, argumentative and opinionated. She introduces Angela to designer clothing and is portrayed as something of a fashion expert, becoming a stylist in Los Angeles for a time before returning to New York and working in fashion PR.

Jenny has 101 references to fashion-related brands associated with her in the text of the I Heart novels, nearly as many as the protagonist of Bridget Jones and more than any other secondary character. This helps to underline her credibility as a fashion expert, but also reflects her importance as a character in the I Heart novels. Kelk has written two I Heart spin-off novellas, where Jenny is the main protagonist (*Jenny Lopez Has a Bad Week (2011)* and *Jenny Lopez Saves Christmas (2014)*).

Virtually all of the brands associated with Jenny are high-end designer brands, the main one being Christian Louboutin, which is also one of the main associations for Angela. When the two characters first meet, they bond over their shared appreciation of Angela's Christian Louboutin Hyde Park Sandals when Jenny recognises both the brand and the style.

**Figure 8.11** *Fashion Brands Associated with Angela's Best Friend (Jenny)*




## 8.6.4 The Mothers

The protagonists' mothers in each of the chick lit series are very similar in outline: Home Counties, middle aged, middle-class and a little overbearing. They are generally portrayed as comic characters.

**Figure 8.12** *Fashion Brands Associated with Protagonists' Mothers in the Chick Lit Corpus*

The word cloud in Figure 8.12 illustrates the brands associated with the protagonists' mothers in the chick lit corpus. Bridget's mother favours Country Casuals or Jaeger "two-pieces", Becky's wears Windsmoor and Angela's favours Dorothy Perkins and Marks & Spencer; they all shop in department stores (Debenhams, John Lewis, Liberty). Bridget's mother wears Givenchy perfume, whilst Becky's wears Tweed and Yardley. Becky's mother has a Cath Kidson handbag from Bicester Village (an off-price designer outlet) and Angela's mother carries a Radley bag. These brands are mostly British, middle-class and aimed at an older demographic. Although there are some designer names in the

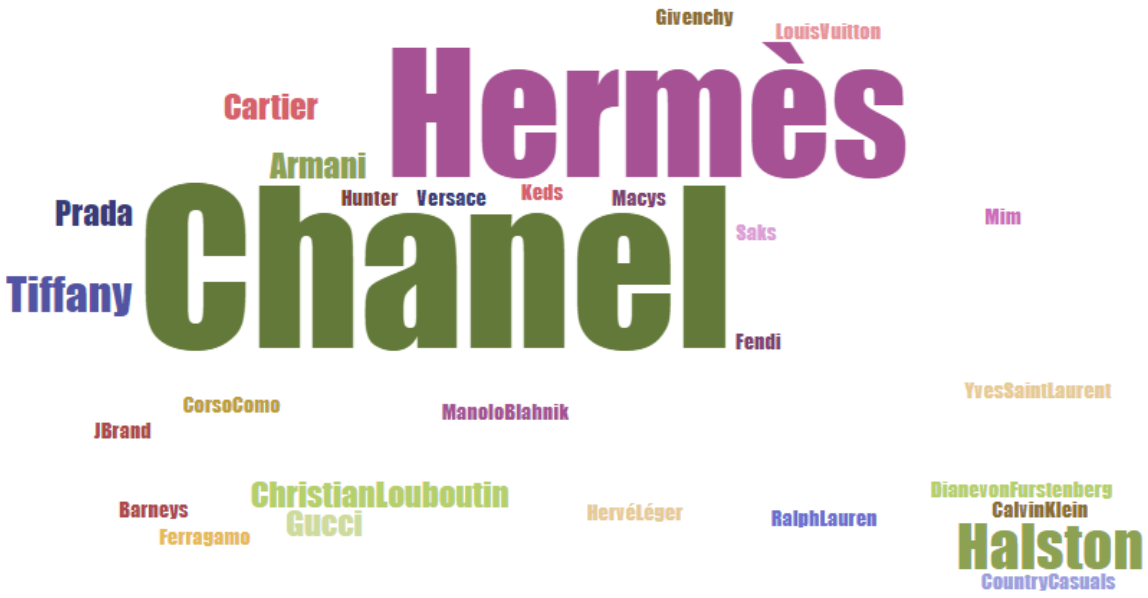
word cloud (Yves St. Laurent and Diane von Furstenberg) these relate to a birthday gift given to Angela's mother by Angela's friend Jenny, rather than something that she would normally buy herself.

### 8.6.5 The Antagonists

Throughout the series, the characters often come into conflict with an antagonist. In the first two *Bridget Jones* books, Bridget comes into conflict with Rebecca - a rich young solicitor who tries to steal Mark Darcy away from Bridget. In the *Shopaholic* series, there are several antagonists, however notable ones include: Alicia, one of Luke's employees who tries to sabotage his business in *Shopaholic Abroad*; Venetia, Becky's obstetrician and Luke's ex-girlfriend in *Shopaholic and Baby*; and Elinor, Luke's mother. In the *I Heart Series*, Angela's nemesis is Cici, one of the administrative assistants at her magazine's publishing company (and granddaughter of the company's owner), who wants Angela's job.

The antagonists are always richer and more sophisticated than the protagonist. They are confident, impeccably well dressed and perfectly groomed, making the protagonist feel inferior in comparison. In terms of brands associated with the aforementioned antagonists, they are almost entirely high-end designer labels, dominated by Chanel and Hermès.

**Figure 8.13** *Fashion Brands Associated with Antagonists in the Chick Lit Corpus*




## 8.7 Summary

The summative content analysis indicates that the novels in the chick lit corpus exhibit relatively high levels of brand name usage in terms of both brand name frequency and brand name variety, however these levels are similar to those of some other genres of contemporary fiction, such as the sex and

shopping genre, and considerably lower than the levels found in *American Psycho* (S. Brown, 1995a, 1995b). The pattern of brand name use varies both between the different chick lit series in the corpus and between individual novels within a series, depending on the nature of the story.

In terms of product category, chick lit novels demonstrate a different profile to those in Friedman's study of American bestsellers. Automotive brands (the largest category in Friedman's study) are barely mentioned in chick lit, but fashion brands and retail stores are mentioned much more frequently. Again, the profile is much closer to that found in S. Brown's study of the sex and shopping genre (S. Brown, 1995a), and fits with the traditional pre-occupations of women's fiction identified by Virginia Woolf (Woolf, 1929). Friedman suggests that the two largest categories of brands in his study (automobiles and magazines) are used by novelists to facilitate symbolic communication, supporting characterisation due to their ability to express the values, self-concepts and stereotypes of their typical brand users (Friedman, 1991). Given that fashion brands are mentioned much more frequently than automobiles in chick lit, it would seem likely that chick lit authors use fashion brands in the same way.

An analysis of the most frequently mentioned fashion brands in each series shows some significant differences. The *Shopaholic* and *I Heart* series are similar to one another in terms of the types of brands mentioned. Although both use a range of expensive and inexpensive brands, the focus is mainly on the designer and luxury sector. The *Bridget Jones* series uses fewer fashion brands and those that it does mention are more evenly distributed amongst the high street, premium and designer sectors.

Finally, an analysis of the relationships between characters and the fashion brands associated with them in the text reveals that the characters of the protagonists are significantly more developed in term of brand associations than other character roles in the novels (with the exception of Jenny Lopez in the *I Heart* novels). Other female characters in the novels are supported to some extent by fashion-brand referencing, particularly the protagonist's best friends. There is little use of fashion-related brands to support male characterisation and those that are used simply serve to illuminate the character's stereotype.

# Chapter 9: Results of the Qualitative Content Analysis

## 9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative content analysis of the chick lit corpus. It addresses the following objective of the study:

- To critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels.

Fashion brands and fashion stores are frequently discussed throughout all three chick lit series in the corpus, with multiple descriptions of shopping trips and fashion clothing. This analysis focuses particularly on the ways in which the characters interact with fashion brands in the narrative.

The chapter begins by examining the three protagonists' relationships with fashion brands, before going on to examine common themes and some of the language and structural techniques which are used in conjunction with fashion brands in the text.

## 9.2 The Protagonists' Relationships with Fashion Brands

As previously noted, fashion brand names are frequently used in chick lit to indicate the cosmopolitan lifestyle and cultural capital of the protagonists (P. Butler & Desai, 2008; Dorney, 2004; Van Slooten, 2006), but it has been argued that the brands do little to flesh out individual character (Dorney, 2004).

The following analysis examines each of the protagonists in the corpus and discusses their relationship with fashion consumption and fashion brands.

### 9.2.1 Bridget Jones

Ramon-Torrijos (2013, p. 111) suggests that "*Bridget Jones is obsessed with fashion, consumerism and beauty…"* In terms of her fashion 'obsession', it is certainly true that Bridget is able to recognise and catalogue designer fashion brands worn by other characters, for example:

> *"Everyone else was in shorts or little dresses, but she was naked except for a tiny sliver of Calvin Klein brown nylon…"* (Fielding, 1999, p. 128)

However, in comparison to the other two protagonists in this study, Bridget does not appear to be particularly obsessed with fashion brands when it comes to her own shopping habits. Bridget is a budget-conscious fashion shopper. Although she is aware of premium and designer labels, she finds it difficult to justify their additional cost and therefore she tends to shop on the high street. She explains her dilemma in some detail in *Bridget Jones's Diary:*

> *"The answer to shopping, I know, is simply to buy a few choice items from Nicole Farhi, Whistles and Joseph but the prices so terrify me that I go scuttling back to Warehouse and Miss Selfridge, rejoicing in a host of dresses at £34.99, get them stuck on my head, then buy things from Marks & Spencer because I don't have to try them on, and at least I've bought something. I have come home with four things, all of them unsuitable and unflattering […] I have thus wasted £119, which would have been enough to buy something really nice from Nicole Farhi, like a very small T-shirt."* (Fielding, 1996, p. 66)

Indeed, Bridget often seems to find shopping for clothing overwhelming. The tension between brand and price is a repeated theme:

> *"Shops all seem to have just slightly different versions of each thing. Throws self into thought-fug with mind unable to settle until has encompassed and catalogued all, for example, available black nylon jackets: French Connection one at £129 or high-class Michael Kors (tiny, square quilted one) at £400. Black nylon jackets in Hennes are only £39.99. Could for example buy ten Hennes black nylon jackets for price of one Michael Kors one but then wardrobe would be more riddled with more black jackets than ever….."* (Fielding, 1999, p. 173)

Even in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, when Bridget does not have to worry about money, she still favours the high street over designer brands:

> *"and I tried to join in pretending I actually buy things off Net-a-Porter instead of just looking at them and going to Zara"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 156)

When she finally shops at Net-a-Porter she continues her thrifty approach, returning unused items and shopping in the sale:

> *"*Send back Net-a-Porter dress that didn't wear for Talitha's party"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 173)

> *"12.30 p.m. Maybe will go on Net-a-Porter and look at the sale."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 212)

Nevertheless, even though Bridget appears to be relatively budget-conscious when it comes to buying fashion, she still shops frequently and buys more clothing than she needs:

> *"Presumably Dalai Lama […] does not leave robes in bottom of wardrobe full of outfits he bought but does not wear from Topshop, Oasis, ASOS, Zara, etc."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 15)

Although there are multiple references to shopping for clothing in the *Bridget Jones* series, Bridget appears to rely heavily on a few key pieces in her wardrobe; for example, her short black Lycra skirt is worn multiple times in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and a navy silk dress is her go-to item in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy.* Other than these items, Bridget does not appear to be confident in her fashion choices; she often relies on friends, either to shop with her and give her advice, or to lend her more expensive items to wear on special occasions, for example:

> *"Eventually I ended up in a very expensive short black silk tunic of Talitha's and insanely high Yves Saint Laurent thigh boots."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 57)

> *"Talitha has helped me order some dresses from Net-a-Porter for her party and have got a really nice one which is J.Crew and not that expensive."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 161)

She also turns to women's magazines for fashion advice, sometimes modelling her outfits on advice given in the magazine or on pictures of celebrities:

> *"Just nipped to Oxford Street, delighted to find that Mango, Topshop, Oasis, Cos, Zara, Aldo, etc. have all read the same edition of Grazia as me!"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 156)

Some of Bridget's issues with fashion stem from her concerns about both her age and her weight. Even in the second book in the series, when Bridget is in her early 30s, she feels too old for the (premium) high street fashion stores that she favours:

> *"Worse, am now so old that young fashion buying generation no longer remember wearing things I wore as teenager. At last realize point at which ladies start going to Jaeger for two-pieces – when do not want to be reminded of lost youth by high-street fashion any more. Have now reached said point. Am going to abandon Kookaï, Agnès B, Whistles etc. in favour of Country Casuals and spirituality."* (Fielding, 1999, p. 174)

Thus, whilst Bridget is reasonably knowledgeable about fashion brands, they don't define her. She favours low prices and value-for-money over designer brand names and, although she shops frequently, she is generally not confident in her fashion choices.

The *Bridget Jones* series conforms to the typical tenets of chick lit fiction with its themes of consumption, lifestyle, fashion and shopping (Philips, 2000); however, the construction of the character of Bridget as a budget-conscious shopper lacking confidence in her fashion choices, is in direct opposition to typical chick lit heroines, who Philips describes as "*women who have confidence in themselves and, to a large degree, in their appearance, a confidence that is validated by their ability to afford designer labels*" (Philips, 2000, p. 239).

Although *Bridget Jones's Diary* is often identified as the prototype for the chick lit genre, several commentators have suggested that it is atypical amongst chick lit novels (Gormley, 2009; Montoro, 2012), and it could be argued that Bridget's character is one of the distinctive features which sets it apart. When *Bridget Jones's Diary* was first published, Bridget was described as being 'more than a fictional character', instead it was suggested that she represented an accurate portrayal of a specific social group (thirty-something, professional, single women) (Philips, 2000) and was someone to whom all women could relate; however Dorney (2004, p. 14) states that "*Bridget is no longer the typical chick*

*lit protagonist*". Although Bridget was hailed as the "*everywoman*" of the 1990s (Knowles, 2004b, p. 41) her anxieties about her weight and obsessive need to be in a romantic relationship are seen as being less relatable to modern women (Dorney, 2004; Harrison, 2016) and the characterisation of chick lit protagonists has evolved accordingly.

Bridget's relationship with fashion and fashion brands also distinguishes her from other contemporary chick lit heroines. Whilst she is willing and eager to spend money on fashion products and other consumer goods, Bridget (like most other chick lit protagonists) is portrayed as a relatively low earner (Knowles, 2004b) and her preference for high street stores could be seen as being realistic for a woman of her income. This is in contrast to many other chick lit novels (such as the *Shopaholic* and *I Heart* series), which use designer and luxury brands to interpellate readers into an aspirational fantasy lifestyle (Dorney, 2004).

### 9.2.2 Becky Bloomwood

In comparison to Bridget, it could be argued that Becky Bloomwood is truly obsessed with fashion and consumerism. C.A. Wilson (2012a, p. 217) suggests that "*Becky sees fashion as a religion and shopping as a calling*".

On initial reading, the character of Becky appears very shallow, interested only in shopping. Although fashion brand names are frequently mentioned in the narrative, Dorney (2004) argues that Becky is motivated purely by acquisition, placing little importance on the actual products or brands that she buys, which she suggests are "*devoid of any significance*" (Dorney, 2004, p. 16) and "*do not flesh out character as in Bridget*" (Dorney, 2004, p. 14). Indeed, she suggests that "*The world of Shopaholic disregards the mythical aspect of branding and leaves us with naked consumerism*." (Dorney, 2004, p. 16).

Van Slooten (2006) offers a different explanation for Becky's compulsive shopping habits, arguing that Becky buys to resolve emotional problems, rather than to acquire goods and services; choosing fashionable purchases to project her ideal personal and professional identities. Like Dorney, Van Slooten suggests that the particular products and brands that Becky buys are not significant beyond Becky's conviction that she needs to have them, and that acquisition of them will help her to "*escape the reality of her bad day and transport her into her fantasy world where she achieves fulfilment*" (Van Slooten, 2006, p. 222).

It is true that Becky is addicted to shopping, and that her major motivation is often acquisition itself rather than a genuine desire to wear or use the product in the long-term. She often describes the pleasure that she derives simply from the act of purchase:

> *"she…hands me the creamy carrier. My hands close over the cord handles and I feel a surge of pure, unadulterated joy. It's mine."* (Kinsella, 2004, pp. 31–32)

It is also clear that, like Bridget, Becky frequently buys branded fashion products but never wears them; for example, when Luke challenges Becky to wear each piece in her wardrobe at least three times, part of her clothes audit reads:

> *"Exercise wear: Stella McCartney yoga pants, Stella McCartney sleeveless top, Black ballet leotard (unworn), Pink pointe ballet shoes (unworn), Black leggings – Sweaty Betty, Grey leggings – Nike (still in bag with receipt), Black leggings 'Anti-cellulite' (never worn), Grey leggings – American Apparel, Hip Hop graffiti dance pants (unworn)…"* (Kinsella, 2010, p. 69)

However, Dorney's and Van Slooten's analyses are over-simplistic, and overlook the depth of Becky's relationship with fashion brands. Throughout the series, Becky regularly itemises the brands that she wears and buys. Becky defines herself by what she wears, and these lists help to centre her identity around a particular set of brands (Van Slooten, 2006), for example:

> *"On the way out I pause in the hall to check my appearance in the mirror (Top: River Island, Skirt: French Connection, Tights: Pretty Polly Velvets, Shoes: Ravel) and reach for my coat (Coat: House of Fraser sale)."* (Kinsella, 2000, p. 87)

> *"I know I went out just planning to buy a single outfit for my screen test. But I ended up . . . Well, I suppose I just got a bit . . . a bit carried away. So my final list of purchases goes like this: 1. Moschino jacket 2. Knee-length Barney's skirt 3. Calvin Klein underwear 4. Pair of new tights and . . . 5. Vera Wang cocktail dress."* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 132)

The first of the quotes above is from the first *Shopaholic* book (*The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic)* where Becky has significant debt and a relatively junior job as a financial journalist. The second quote is from the second book in the series, *Shopaholic Abroad*, where Becky has (temporarily) solved her debt problems with a better-paying job on TV, and is in New York with millionaire boyfriend, Luke, hoping to secure a similar job on US TV. Although Becky is always concerned about the fashion brands that she wears, it is clear that there is a shift from high street to designer brands over the course of the early part of the series, signalling Becky's growing professional (and personal success). This shift is solidified when Becky finds her professional niche as a personal shopper, and ultimately marries Luke giving her access to increased financial resources.

Even after her marriage to Luke, Becky frequently goes into debt in order to buy the fashion products that she craves, putting fashion and image above financial security. Van Slooten (2006) suggests that Becky does not make rational decisions when it comes to spending money on fashion because she is buying to resolve her emotional issues, rather than to obtain goods and services. Because of this, she argues that the actual products that Becky buys are "*not as important as the fantasies that revolve*

*around the products*" (Van Slooten, 2006, p. 222). Becky's purchases are usually described in terms of brands rather than physical descriptions of the items and, as previously discussed, fashion brands are symbolic devices; they add emotional values to products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Thus, Becky's fantasies about the products that she buys and how they will change her life, are tied to the brands rather than the products themselves.

Throughout the *Shopaholic series,* Becky is consistently discerning when it comes to fashion brands:

> *"…and to this day, if I buy something from a shop that's a bit uncool, I cut the label out. So that if I'm ever stopped in the street, I can pretend I don't know where it's from."* (Kinsella, 2000, p. 16)

Becky uses fashion brands to repeatedly redefine and reinvent herself. The high-end luxury and designer brands that she favours play into her fantasies of success and recognition in her various endeavours. She defines herself by her purchases and "*fashion becomes Becky's vehicle for creating a self."* (Van Slooten, 2006, p. 227). She is focused on her outward appearance and believes that other people will define her by the brands that she wears, for example:

> *" 'I thought the bag you bought at the weekend was so perfect you would use it for ever and it would be your signature look and people would call you "The Girl with the Lara Bohinc Bag"?'"* (Kinsella, 2014, p. 140)

Becky creates specific looks for herself for each new occasion. Her outfits are carefully planned to be appropriate to the situation and she uses fashion brands to communicate her thoughts and feelings:

> *"I'm […] putting the finishing touches to my 'meeting-my-long-lost-sister' outfit. It's taken me several days to decide, but after a lot of thought I've gone for a look which is casual but still special. I'm wearing my most flattering Seven jeans, some boots with spiky heels, a T-shirt made ages ago for me by Danny, and a gorgeous pale-pink Marc Jacobs jacket […] 'It's like . . . balancing formal with informal,' I explain. 'So the jacket says, "This is a special occasion." Whereas the jeans say, "We're sisters, we can be relaxed with each other!"'"* (Kinsella, 2004, p. 67)

Van Slooten (2006) argues that by wearing recognisable and distinctive high-end brands, Becky "*projects an image of luxury and status to others and creates a feeling of inner satisfaction and self-worth"* (Van Slooten, 2006, p. 227). This is exemplified in *Shopaholic and Baby*; when Becky is pregnant, she becomes worried that her husband, Luke, is having an affair with her obstetrician, his ex-girlfriend, Venetia. Determined to stake her claim, Becky uses branded fashion to boost her confidence and assert her position at her ante-natal appointments:

> *"As we arrive at the birth centre on Friday, I'm dressed in my best 'looking fabulous with no effort' outfit of Seven maternity jeans (frayed), a sexy red stretchy top and my new Moschino killer heels"* (Kinsella, 2007)

However, Venetia, who wears Armani, Chanel and Yves St Laurent, understands Becky's use of fashion and systematically strips her 'armour' and identity away, persuading Luke that Becky's fashion items are bad for her health in pregnancy. Becky later explains to her friend:

> *"She took away my shoes and my bag and she made me put these things on, just so I'd look all gross in front of Luke."* (Kinsella, 2007)

Thus, like Tom Wolfe in *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Hoeller, 1994), Kinsella uses fashion brand names in the *Shopaholic* novels to emphasise Becky's preoccupation with her own appearance, the self-construction of her identity and her concern about how she appears to others.

Becky is portrayed as someone who knows, understands and uses fashion codes. She is recognised as a fashion expert by her friends, who frequently borrow clothing and get styling advice from her. For example:

> *"She's wearing a really nice pink velvet skirt from Whistles, which I've also got – but she's teamed it with a disastrous brown Lurex polo neck…*
>
> *'…can I borrow your Jimmy Choos? We've got the same size feet, haven't we?'*
>
> *'OK,' I say. 'They're in the wardrobe.' I hesitate, trying to be tactful. 'And do you want to borrow a top? It's just I've actually got the top that goes with your skirt. Pink cashmere with little beads. Really nice.'"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 56)

She later puts this knowledge and understanding of fashion and style to good use in her career as a personal shopper:

> *"'It'll be fine,' I say reassuringly. 'It'll be fine.' I scribble something in my notebook and stare at it, thinking hard. This is the moment of my new job I love the most. The initial challenge. Here's the puzzle – find the solution…*
>
> *'OK,' I say at last. 'I have it. Your Helmut Lang pant suit for the meetings, your Jil Sander dress for the lunch – and we'll find you something new for the dinner.' I squint at her. 'Maybe something in a deep green.'"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 195)

Whilst Dorney (2004 p. 18) suggests that Becky's job is "*merely a means to more lipstick and another pair of shoes*", Becky sees personal shopping as more of a calling. She turns down a well-paid job in an advertising agency in favour of a personal shopping job at Barneys, explaining:

> *"But what Michael said at that lunch – about not falling into anything else, about going after what I truly wanted – made me think. About my career, about my life, about what I really wanted to do for a living. And to give my mum her due, as soon as I explained what this job at Barney's would involve, she stared at me, and said, 'But love, why on earth didn't you think of this before?'"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 197)

It is clear throughout the series that fashion is important to Becky and that she takes it seriously. She is an avid reader of fashion magazines and is always aware of the latest fashion trends and 'it'

products. Van Slooten (2006) argues that, because Becky defines herself by what she wears, she is obliged to be aware of, and keep up with, fashion trends so that she does not become out of date. However, Becky not only knows what is in fashion, but she is able to put together outfits for both herself and others that are appropriate for the occasion and look good; thus, the fashion brands used in the *Shopaholic* series not only act as a cipher for the protagonist's lifestyle, but they also indicate her taste and expertise in the field of fashion and highlight her cultural capital. C.A. Wilson (2012b, p.221) suggests that Becky's purchases blur the boundaries between culture and consumption:

> *"Through Becky's shopping, Kinsella questions the idea of "commodity culture"—a phrase that blurs the line between cultural enlightenment and material gratification."* (C. A. Wilson, 2012b, p. 218)

Therefore, Becky is very different to Bridget in terms of her fashion consumption behaviour. She is a confident fashion shopper who is very knowledgeable when it comes to fashion brands and uses this knowledge in both her career and her personal life. She favours luxury and designer brand names, and constantly uses these brands to re-create her own identity and highlight her cultural capital.

### 9.2.3 Angela Clark

Angela is situated somewhere between the other two protagonists when it comes to her relationship with fashion brands. She begins the first book in the series, much like Bridget, as a fairly typical British high street shopper, with comfortable flat shoes from Topshop, a Next 'pleather' handbag and Marks & Spencer underwear.

However, she is knowledgeable about designer footwear:

> *"I loved fashion, but if I couldn't see the label, I didn't have a clue. Identifying shoes, on the other hand, was my secret super-power."* (Kelk, 2011, p. 32)

At the beginning of the series, she is a bridesmaid at her friend Louisa's wedding and is wearing a pair of £400 Christian Louboutin sandals which were a gift from the bride. When she arrives in New York, Angela bonds with the concierge of her New York hotel (Jenny) over these Louboutin sandals, recognising a kindred spirit when the concierge is able to identify not only the brand, but the model name of the shoes:

> *"'Wow, Hyde Park Louboutins, nice…"* (Kelk, 2009, p. 19)

As Philips (2000) notes, female friendship in chick lit novels is frequently expressed in terms of shared tastes and consumption patterns and this is certainly the case in the *I Heart* novels. Angela is subsequently given a makeover by Jenny, who takes her shopping in Bloomingdales and introduces her to premium and designer clothing brands:

> *"Jenny sent the assistants scurrying across the shop floor with another flick of her wrist. I stood in my pants, peeping round the corner of the slatted wooden door waiting for the next rack of clothes. And in no time they arrived. Vera Wang Lavender. Tory Burch. Nanette Lepore. DVF. 3.1. Phillip Lim. Paul & Joe Sister. More Marc Jacobs. This was so much fun."* (Kelk, 2009)

The shopping trip trope, where the protagonist and her closest friend(s) go shopping together, is a key feature of many chick lit novels (Philips, 2000), and is repeated frequently throughout the *I Heart* series.

Fashion, and in particular, wearing the right brands, is seen as being important by Angela's New York friends, and Angela uses designer fashion brands to construct a new identity for herself in the USA. Philips (2000) notes that fashion consumption in chick lit novels is undeniably concerned with the construction of identity, however she argues that only certain brands are acceptable in this construction:

> *"the prevalence of brand names suggests that that construction can only exist within a limited lexicon of consumer products. There is a strict hierarchy of labels in these narratives….Fashion and style products are cited to connote a particular kind of lifestyle; goods are not only bought for pleasure, but so that they should be recognized as signifiers of style and class."* (Philips, 2000, p. 250)

Over the course of the series, Angela learns about designer fashion from Jenny, and gradually becomes more knowledgeable and confident in her own fashion choices, able to fit in with her high-fashion New York friends:

> *"A year ago, I'd have struggled to tell the difference between Prada and Primark if I couldn't see the price tag."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 101)

> *"I'd been studying shopping under Jenny's tutelage for almost eighteen months and I thought I was doing well. I hardly ever called her before I bought something these days, and she'd only sent me home to change once in the last twelve months…"* (Kelk, 2011, p. 79)

As the series progresses, Angela is mainly described as owning and wearing designer brands, but she still mixes in a few high street names, for example:

> *"Grace was traipsing up and down the office with my Jimmy Choo black patent pumps on her feet and my grey suede Gucci MaryJanes on her hands. This was entirely my fault for keeping such an extensive shoe library under my desk. Of course, she hadn't bothered with the Topshop ballet pumps or the Aldo heels, had she?"* (Kelk, 2013, p. 143)

These (often British) high street brands help to underline that Angela is still normal and down-to-earth - someone that the reader can still relate to.

Angela's closest association with a fashion item throughout the series is with her Mark Jacobs handbag. This is the first fashion item that she buys independently in New York, without any guidance from Jenny:

> *"'I'm looking for a bag'…*
>
> *'Any favourite designers?'*
>
> *'Marc Jacobs?' I offered, thinking back to yesterday's induction into the fashion floor. It seemed to be the right answer because she smiled and finished off the collection of luxury leather in front of her with the most beautiful, beautiful bag I had ever laid eyes on. I reached out to stroke its buttery softness, the dark brown of the leather looked like milk chocolate and the subtle gold detailing winked at me. 'Buy me,' it whispered tantalizingly. 'I complete you.'"* (Kelk, 2009, p. 39)

This bag becomes Angela's constant companion throughout the series. Whilst she occasionally falls out with her friends and has misunderstandings with her boyfriend/husband, the bag is always seen as reliable:

> *"..unlike everything else in my life, this bag was the one thing that would never let me down."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 116)

Chick-lit novels are frequently identified as 'bildungsromans' or coming of age novels. According to Butler & Desai (2008) in these modern bildungsromans the maturation of the protagonist "*is increasingly marked as the ability to adapt oneself to a globalized society, to gain entrance into a professional labor class and to access its corresponding bourgeois luxury and leisure consumption, and to develop a comprehensive self-knowledge that is linked to a well-articulated identity*." (P. Butler & Desai, 2008, p. 15).

In many ways the *I Heart* series fits this description of a bildungsroman. Over the course of the series, Angela reinvents herself in New York, building a successful career as a journalist and author, amassing a fashionable wardrobe full of designer clothes and becoming a wife and mother. The Marc Jacobs bag stays with Angela throughout these changes and becomes a metaphor for her new life. When she first buys the bag, it is special and novel, the most expensive bag she has ever owned. It is constantly described as 'beautiful' and 'amazing' and she vows to take care of it, but by the third book, *I Heart Paris*, the bag has become worn and scuffed, and is just another normal part of Angela's day-to-day life in New York:

> *"I […] swapped my shoes for the ever-present flip-flops in my Marc Jacobs satchel. I thought back to the precious moment when the bag had come into my life. I had treasured it more than anything else I'd ever owned, I never put it on the floor, always checked that pens had their lids on, lip glosses weren't leaking and there was no way on God's green earth, I'd have ever put a pair of dirty street shoes in it. Rummaging around for my left flip-flop, I wanted to shed a little tear for the*

> *unravelled stitching and the used subway cards, crumpled napkins and dozens of half empty packs of chewing gum that now littered the lining."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 5)

Instead of being 'beautiful' and 'amazing', as the series progresses it is increasingly described as 'knackered', 'wrecked' and 'battered'. By the seventh book in the series, *I Heart Forever,* the bag is considered to be an embarrassment by Angela's high-fashion friends in New York:

> *"'Angie, you must have like a thousand bags now, you have to let that thing go.'*
>
> *'You're confusing my bag collection with yours,' I told her, stroking the soft, supple brown leather. 'Anyway, I love this bag. I think it gets better with age.'*
>
> *'It doesn't, you should ditch it,' Erin assured me."* (Kelk, 2017a, p. 23)

The bag finally meets its end *I Heart Hawaii* when the strap snaps it falls into the road and is run over by a taxi. Angela's husband, Alex, has it fixed, using the strap from his guitar as the new handle and with a piece of their daughter's baby blanket sewn into the lining; thus, the bag has evolved beyond the brand to represent Angela the wife and mother at the end of the series.

Therefore, similar to the other two protagonists, Angela's fashion choices change over the course of the series, moving from high street to designer brands, however the shift is quicker and more pronounced in Angela's case; as soon as she arrives in New York and is introduced to the designer brands, they become her 'new normal'. The designer brands help her to establish a new identity for herself in New York, removed from her British suburban upbringing. Whilst she may not be quite as fashion-conscious as her new friends in New York, the designer brands help her to fit-in to her new friendship group and reflect her new lifestyle.

## 9.3 Common Themes

Although each of the protagonists is slightly different in terms of their relationship with fashion brands, there are a number of themes which are common throughout all three series.

### 9.3.1 Fashion and Identity

Numerous authors have noted the link between identity construction and consumerism in fiction (e.g. P. Butler & Desai, 2008; Gorton, 2004; Patterson & Brown, 1999). The previous analysis has illustrated how the chick lit protagonists in the corpus use fashion brands to deliberately construct their own identity; however, there are some commonalities in the ways in which the brand names are used to do this.

#### *9.3.1.1 Defining items*

In many cases, a single branded item is identified as being one which defines the character. As previously noted, Becky frequently believes that a particular branded fashion item will define her in the minds of other people, for example:

> *"People will call me the Girl in the NK Malone shades"* (Kinsella, 2000, p. 184)

She fantasises about these purchases and how they will change the way that others view her.

Meanwhile, throughout the *I Heart* series, Angela's Marc Jacobs bag acts as a symbol of her new life in the USA, defining her and solidifying her transformation from suburban British children's book author to fashionable New York blogger. This role is signalled when she first sees the bag:

> *"'Buy me,' it whispered tantalizingly. 'I complete you.'"* (Kelk, 2009)

Thus, the bag becomes the final piece in her initial New York makeover and remains her "signature" item throughout the series.

#### *9.3.1.2 Life changing*

Fashion products are often identified by chick lit protagonists as being "life changing" or, alternatively, as symbolising the changes that they have gone through to get where they are today.

For example, Bridget uses fashion to indicate to Mark that she has made a change in her life:

> *"Think will stay in bed, read Marie Claire, and do nails, then maybe see if Jude and Shazzer fancy going to Jigsaw. Would really like to get something new for when see Mark again next week, as if to stress am changed . . ."* (Fielding, 1999, p. 113)

Becky imagines that each new purchase will change her life or the way that people think about her, whilst Angela believes that her designer fashion items are a fundamental element of her new life and identity in New York. When Angela's luggage is blown up by airport security on a trip to Paris, she says:

> *"It had taken me a year to get comfortable with myself, with my new life, and it felt as if someone was testing me, taking it away bit by bit. Starting with my accessories."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 56)

#### *9.3.1.3 Meaning and communication*

Chick lit characters often use branded fashion items to communicate meaning. They carefully select their outfits to be appropriate to a specific situation and communicate a specific message. For example, when Angela returns to the UK on holiday and arranges to meet her ex-fiancé, she plans each element of her outfit:

> *"When Mark and I were together, I existed exclusively in jeans, T-shirts and knackered Converse so I didn't want to show up in Alexander Wang glitter trousers and a leather corset, but I did want to show him how much I'd changed…I went for*

> *a little grey Paul & Joe Sister bird-print dress, a gift from Erin's pre-baby wardrobe, and a pair of my mother's black tights. …. I added some ballet flats, the knackered old denim jacket I'd systematically destroyed through two years of sixth form and my equally knackered Marc Jacobs bag, which I had managed to destroy in under two years, looked in the mirror and declared myself 'OK'. The dress was pretty but the jacket played it down. The bag was clearly designer but the battering it had taken told you I wasn't precious."* (Kelk, 2012, p. 98)

In the same way, chick lit characters 'read' or judge others based on what they are wearing. For example, when Bridget Jones first meets Mark Darcy, she instantly dismisses him as a potential romantic partner, based on his sweater.

#### *9.3.1.4 Stereotypes*

Finally, descriptions of clothing and fashion brands are used to communicate character stereotypes. This is particularly true for secondary and minor characters, for example:

> *"He was like a walking, talking Levis ad. There was no possible way he could have spent his formative years anywhere other than an Abercrombie & Fitch catalogue."* (Kelk, 2010a, p. 51)

> *"Blonde hair pulled back in a practical ponytail, freshly ironed vest tucked into her freshly ironed shorts, cardigan slung over her arm and small Radley bag strapped across her body in front of her. She was a born British tourist."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 94)

In these instances, brief descriptions of clothing and/or mentions of particular fashion brands evoke the stereotype of the type of person who wears them.

### 9.3.2 Fashion and Money

As discussed in Chapter 4, whilst there is a significant financial cost to building and maintaining the chick lit protagonist's wardrobe, there are rarely any long-lasting financial consequences for the character (Scanlon, 2013). Nevertheless, the monetary value of fashion items is a recurring theme throughout all three chick lit series studied.

#### *9.3.2.1 Cost of fashion brands*

In all of the novels, there is an acknowledgement that designer fashion is expensive, for example:

> *"Go to La Perla – no, don't go to La Perla, the expense is eye-watering."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 126)

> *"I was decked out in a gorgeous red and green striped cashmere sweater that I'd purchased for an obscene amount of money last time I stopped by J.Crew"* (Kelk, 2013, p. 137)

Whilst the chick lit protagonists are not poor, they are not particularly rich (at least before marriage). At the start of their respective series, each protagonist is a middle-class graduate in a relatively junior job in the media, so it is unlikely that they could realistically afford to purchase large quantities of

expensive designer fashion items on a regular basis. In the case of Bridget Jones, this issue is solved by Bridget shopping mostly on the high street. Although she would like to shop premium brands, she is constrained by her budget, e.g.

> *"…his companion who was…wearing a suit which I have tried on twice in Whistles and had to take off as too expensive…"* (Fielding, 1996, p. 53)

In the first two books of the *Shopaholic* series, Becky is frequently in debt due to her shopping addiction, using an overdraft, credit cards and loans from friends to pay for the fashion items that she craves:

> *"I lie in bed staring up at the ceiling and, for the first time in months, calculate how much I owe to everybody. The bank, VISA, my Harvey Nichols card, my Debenhams card, my Fenwick's card . . . And now Suze, too. It's about . . . let's think . . . it's about six thousand pounds. A cold feeling creeps over me as I contemplate this figure. How on earth am I going to find six thousand pounds?"* (Kinsella, 2000, pp. 27–28)

Once she marries Luke, she is able to partly finance her shopping habit through their joint bank account, and even goes to the extent of specifying this in their pre-nuptial agreement:

> *"5.1 The joint account shall be used for necessary expenditure on household expenses. 'Household expenses' shall be defined to include Miu Miu skirts, pairs of shoes and other items of apparel deemed essential by the Bride."* (Kinsella, 2002, p. 235)

However, she continues to use her personal credit cards and overdrafts to supplement this source of funding.

Similarly, Angela finances her first major shopping trip in New York from her joint account with her cheating ex-fiancé.

> *"Before I even knew what I'd done, I moved half the cash from the joint account over to my personal account. He was hardly going to miss it, he earned a fortune, and by rights, half of it was allegedly mine. And more importantly, it covered my shopping spree. Result."* (Kelk, 2009, p. 34)

Later most of Angela's shopping is paid for by credit card:

> *"Before I could even finish arguing with myself, my credit card was out, screaming with the weight of the purchases, and all three bags were bought. It was far too easy."* (Kelk, 2012, p. 121)

It has been argued that the main role of the protagonist's job in a chick lit narrative is to generate funds to support her shopping activities (Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Philips, 2000). Thanks to their jobs, chick lit protagonists are independent women who earn their own money and are able to choose how to spend it, and frequently do so by buying branded fashion products (Philips, 2000). However, it is

also clear that the protagonists are often unable to buy everything that they desire using their own income, instead they must either go into debt in order to finance their purchases, or be backed by a richer man (Bridget is able to shop at Net-A-Porter thanks to Mark's life insurance; Becky's financial issues ease when she can dip into the joint account that Luke sets up; and Angela takes money from a joint account that had been mainly funded by her ex-fiancé). Smyczyńska (2004) argues that, despite their apparent financial independence, many chick lit protagonists still feel powerless as a result of their neurotic characters, lack of career opportunities and/or inability to afford everything that they want; however, by spending their man's money, they are able to reverse their roles and achieve a temporary power balance.

#### *9.3.2.2 Buyer's remorse*

Whilst the *Shopaholic* series explicitly characterises Becky as a compulsive consumer, there are hints of compulsive buying behaviour in all three series, with protagonists frequently referencing fashion products that they have purchased but never worn. S. Brown (1995b) suggests that novels effectively demonstrate many key aspects of compulsive buying behaviour, with characters who feel compelled to shop for a number of reasons including low self-esteem, neuroticism and the temporary positive feelings ('mood repair') that consumption brings them. Harzewski (2011, p.12) concurs, suggesting that *"as consumption is never satisfied, the chick lit protagonist is, at worst, an addict"*.

Post-purchase feelings of remorse are a frequent consequence of compulsive consumption behaviour (S. Brown, 1995b), however Harzewski argues that chick lit novels *"rarely acknowledge the deflation or self-loathing that can accompany the aftermath of an impulse purchase or heavy spending."* (Harzewski, 2011, p. 12)

The three Chick lit protagonists in the corpus all love to shop, and often buy fashion products on impulse, however, in contradiction to Harzewski's observation, they also suffer from buyer's remorse, particularly where they realise how much they have spent. For example, Bridget acknowledges that her high street purchases are not always a bargain:

> *"I have come home with four things, all of them unsuitable and unflattering….I have thus wasted £119…"* (Fielding, 1996, p. 66)

Whilst Becky is horrified when she realises how much she spent on a Vera Wang cocktail dress:

> *"Thousands of dollars. Although, for a designer like Vera Wang, that price is actually quite . . . Well, it's really very . . . Oh God, I feel slightly sick. I don't even want to think about how much it cost. I don't want to think about those noughts."* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 133)

And Angela regrets a large cosmetics purchase:

> *"Before I knew what was happening, I'd been sucked through the doors and was […] spending $250 on the Benefit cosmetics counter. An hour later, I wandered back out onto the pavement… The sun was beating down on me and my new purchases, threatening to melt my new make-up [...] My new writer's pride had been replaced with buyer's remorse."* (Kelk, 2009, p. 71)

Therefore, whilst the protagonists demonstrate aspects of compulsive buying behaviour, the novels acknowledge that the positive mood elevation offered by shopping is short-lived and often followed by buyer's remorse.

#### *9.3.2.3 Fashion brands as an investment*

Kim & Joung (2016) note that the quality levels and high prices associated with luxury goods are closely associated with consumers' perceptions of luxury purchases as 'investments'. It is therefore unsurprising that chick lit protagonists frequently justify their expensive designer purchases as an investment, for example:

> *"I could invest £500 in a bag I would use for the rest of my life. I'd just use it all the time. For every occasion. Every single day."* (Kelk, 2009, p. 39)

> *"I'm wearing all black – but expensive black. The kind of deep, soft black you fall into. A simple sleeveless dress from Whistles, the highest of Jimmy Choos, a pair of stunning uncut amethyst earrings. And please don't ask how much it all cost, because that's irrelevant. This is investment shopping. The biggest investment of my life."* (Kinsella, 2000, p. 115)

The use of the term 'investment' implies that the character is buying the item in the expectation of earning income or profit from it at a later date. Fashion as an investment is a particular theme in the *Shopaholic* series. Becky regularly claims that her purchases are an investment, either in her career or for the future and, on several occasions throughout the series, Becky's purchases actually prove to be sound financial decisions. In *Shopaholic Abroad* she auctions her possessions to get out of debt, managing to cover all of her bills and donate the additional funds to charity. She even makes a profit on some of the things that she has bought:

> *"'You know, it just shows, you were right all along. Shopping is an investment. I mean, like, how much did you make on your Denny and George scarf?'*

> *'Erm . . .' I close my eyes, trying to work it out. 'About . . . 60 per cent?' 'Sixty per cent return! In less than a year! You see? That's better than the crummy old stock market!'"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 187)

In *Shopaholic and Sister* Becky makes money on eBay by selling all of the surplus household goods that she bought on honeymoon and in *Shopaholic and Baby* Luke and Becky compete to make the most profit by investing money for their baby's trust fund; Becky invests in a range of seemingly worthless "future antiques" including a Tiffany necklace and limited-edition Topshop bikini, but finally beats

Luke through her investment in a (fictional) online handbag retailer. Finally, in *Mini Shopaholic*, she takes to bartering her fashion products for goods and services to throw Luke a big birthday party:

> *"'Have you come to barter a marquee for two Marc Jacobs bags?' There's a long pause, as though she's mulling this over. 'Can I see the bags?' she says. This isn't going quite as I expected. 'Well, can I see the marquee?' I counter."* (Kinsella, 2010, p. 113)

Thus, whilst Becky's purchases appear to be frivolous and irresponsible, she somehow always comes out on top, using the items that she has bought to solve her problems. This underlines her characterisation as an "expert" shopper, particularly in relation to fashion products - she buys things of value and worth; it also supports Luke's assertion that "*Becky's instincts match no one else's"*; however, it reinforces the idea that designer fashion is an investment purchase and that there are no lasting financial consequences of excessive consumption.

#### *9.3.2.4 Mitigating the cost of fashion*

Van Slooten (2006) suggests that chick lit novels provide a 'safe space' for readers to vicariously experience consumerist fantasies of self-creation through fashion; however, she also expresses concern that the non-judgemental tone adopted by the authors when describing the protagonists' conspicuous consumption leads the reader to believe that such fantasies are attainable. Similarly, Knowles (2004b) argues that there is a mismatch between the relatively low income levels of chick lit heroines and their excessive consumption of expensive branded fashion items making the descriptions of their fashion consumption improbable, but notes that this issue rarely draws attention or comment.

An analysis of the novels in the corpus suggests that there is a recognition within chick lit that fashion items are expensive, and to deal with this the protagonists have a number of ways of mitigating the cost of being fashionable.

Firstly, they love a bargain; frequently shopping in the sales and designer outlets:

> *"Mabel was wearing a furry jacket and a sticky-out red skirt which I'd got in the ILoveGorgeous sale…"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 243)

> *"I got the most fab Ralph Lauren top at this designer outlet in Utah. Ninety per cent off!"* (Kinsella, 2004, p. 82)

> *"'Angie, when we go shopping in New York, where do we go?' Jenny asked. 'Bloomingdale's? Bergdorf's?' […] 'Not where do we go to try things on but never buy them unless they're in the sales. Where do we actually go shopping?' 'Um, Century 21 and Filene's,' I admitted...'"*(Kelk, 2010a, p. 73)

Where they can't afford the original designer pieces, they use their fashion knowledge to identify viable high street substitutes:

> *"And I was planning to buy these amazing thousand-pound stiletto boots from Vivienne Westwood. Anyway. There's a fifty-pound version in Topshop. I'll get those instead."* (Kinsella, 2007)

In addition, they often get discounts or borrow fashion items through their jobs (or those of their friends). For example, when Becky works at Barneys, she makes the most of her staff discount:

> *"'Sorry to bother you, Becky. Just to let you know, I've put aside those Donna Karan mules you wanted. In the taupe and the black, right?' 'Er . . . yes,' I say hurriedly. 'Yes, that's fine.' 'Oh, and Accounts called, to say that takes you up to your discount limit for this month.'"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 198)

And Angela is frequently given or lent clothes by her friend Jenny, who works in fashion PR:

> *"In an attempt to avoid checking my suitcase, I'd packed as light as possible, but that meant I was hobbling around the airport in six-inch tasselled Giuseppe shoeboots that Jenny insisted were 'totally Vegas' when she'd brought them home from the sample cupboard."* (Kelk, 2011, p. 65)

Finally, chick lit characters share fashion items, regularly borrowing one another's clothing or giving their friends items that they no longer want.

> *"'Oh well.' Suze's face droops briefly. 'But I can borrow a dress, can I?' 'Of course.' I screw up my face for a moment, thinking hard. 'Why don't you wear my new Tocca dress with your red shoes and my English Eccentrics wrap.'"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 54)

> *"I sent my emails first before layering up to hit the shops and pulling on my boots, aka Erin's hand-me-down Haider Ackermann from last season."* (Kelk, 2011, p. 170)

Thus, whilst there is clearly an element of fantasy in the descriptions of protagonists' designer outfits, there is also an acknowledgement that they are constrained to some extent by their relatively low incomes and therefore must find alternative ways of satisfying their desires for fashion products.

### 9.3.3 Fashion, Desire and Pleasure

Throughout all three series, fashion brands (particularly luxury and designer brands) are mostly written about in a positive way. They are depicted as objects of desire and a source of excitement and pleasure.

#### *9.3.3.1 Desire*

In Chapter 4 it is noted that the romantic hero is often relegated to a background role in chick lit, with men being upstaged by fashion products and other commodities (Harzewski, 2006). As the following excerpts illustrate, the protagonists often talk about fashion products in terms of love and desire:

> *"And I freeze, as she puts the most exquisite sandal I've ever seen onto the counter. It's a pale, creamy orange colour, with the same strappy shape as the lilac one – but instead of the blackberry, there's a tiny clementine by the toe. It's instant love.*

> *I can't move my eyes away. 'Would you like to try it?' says the girl, and I feel a lurch of desire, right to the pit of my stomach."* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 17)

> *"'How much?' I asked, picking it up delicately. It was heart-stoppingly beautiful. Was it wrong that I felt more passion for this bag than I had felt in my and Mark's bedroom for the last three years?"* (Kelk, 2009, p. 39)

> *"She pulled out what might have been the most beautiful dress I had ever laid eyes on. 'Tibi. You like?' She swished the coral-pink silk in front of me. Delicate pleats fell from an empire waistline in a sartorial sigh. I wanted to marry it."* (Kelk, 2011, p. 124)

Thus, shopping and fashion appear to trump men, sex and romance in chick lit, producing heightened states of arousal. This echoes S. Brown's observation that descriptions of shopping trips in Judith Kranz's *Scruples* draw a direct relationship between shopping behaviour and sexual gratification (S. Brown, 1995b, p. 101)

#### *9.3.3.2 Excitement, pleasure, joy and consolation*

Shopping is rarely a mundane chore for the chick list protagonist; instead, it is depicted as a source of excitement and thrills:

> *"Looking at the real-life clothes after so long looking at the websites was almost like seeing film stars in real life after seeing them in magazines."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 156)

> *"I mean, visiting any shop for the first time is exciting […] But this is a thousand times better. A million times. Because this isn't just any old shop, is it? This is a world-famous shop. I'm actually here. I'm in Saks on Fifth Avenue in New York"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 93)

Fashion products are routinely described as "beautiful", "gorgeous" and "fabulous", they are a constant source of pleasure and joy for chick lit characters:

> *"I can spot Ralph Lauren knitwear . . . a rail full of fabulous coats . . . there's a stack of Prada bags . . . I mean, this is like a dream come true!"* (Kinsella, 2001, p. 97)

> *"I couldn't help but feel a very pleasant tingly sensation for all the beautiful things. Chanel 2.55 bags, couture Dior gowns, Prada purses. It all just made the world seem a more lovely place."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 62)

Similarly, fashion products feature prominently in the fantasies and day-dreams of chick lit characters:

> *"I was living in a big house and going on holiday to Barbados with all my friends, and walking into Agnès B and buying anything I wanted. It felt so real."* (Kinsella, 2000, p. 39)

> *"And at the front of the garden, under the archway, was Alex. And since it was my fantasy and not my mother's, he was wearing a slim-fitting Dior Homme suit, a skinny black tie and his beat up black Converse."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 81)

Kim et al. (2011) suggest that a number of motivators underlie luxury brand consumption, including self-directed pleasure, where consumers buy luxury brands to experience bliss and contentment, and self-gift giving, where consumers buy luxury brands to reward themselves. Accordingly, when chick lit characters are sad or upset, they turn to shopping and fashion products to cheer themselves (and others) up:

> *"Just something small, to cheer me up. A T-shirt or something. Or even some bubble bath. I need to buy myself something."* (Kinsella, 2000, p. 129)

> *"When everything else was going wrong, at least a girl could still rely on Marc Jacobs to make her smile."* (Kelk, 2010a, p. 108)

These observations correspond with those of S. Brown (1995b) and Van Slooten (2006), who have also noted characters' use of shopping as a mood enhancer in women's popular fiction.

Therefore, branded fashion products are depicted as items which deliver excitement, pleasure and happiness to characters in chick lit, which would make chick lit novels a good choice for product placement by fashion brands.

### 9.3.4 Negativity about Branded Fashion Products

Although for the most part, fashion brands are discussed positively in chick lit; there are some occasions when they are written about in unfavourable terms. For example:

> *"'I've got a new bag. It's Hermès,' she said, holding up the handbag […] 'Well, that's nice. It's beautiful,' I lied. The handbag was mad. It had no rhyme or reason, buckles and straps and loops bursting out everywhere like lunatics."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 235)

Many of the negative associations come about because the product or brand is inaccessible to the character for some reason, for example because it is too expensive or doesn't suit the character:

> *"The next time I wanted to pay to feel horrible about myself, I'd just go to Abercrombie & Fitch to try on jeans."* (Kelk, 2011, p. 23)

> *"'Chanel bags are bit obvious, anyway,' I said quietly, puffing out my cheeks to stop my eyes from prickling. 'Not really me.'"* (Kelk, 2017a, p. 165)

Sometimes the character is happy with their own fashion choices until they compare them to those of another character:

> *"My baggy boyfriend jeans and little pink American Apparel T-shirt couldn't compare with Jenny's skin-tight Sevens and clingy, white, deep V-neck."* (Kelk, 2010a, p. 110)

> *"As a general rule, I hated women who looked good in trousers, primarily because I didn't, and she looked amazing. The nude patent Louboutins didn't hurt either. I had a minor sulk about my Topshop ankle boots…"* (Kelk, 2013, p. 21)

On other occasions, characters' fashion choices are negatively judged by others:

> *I can't help giving her the Mummy Once-over myself, and she's one of those mothers who wears Crocs over nubbly home-made socks. (Why would you do that? Why?)* (Kinsella, 2010, p. 10)

> *"My comfy, comfy leggings, cocoon-like Club Monaco sweater and battered old Uggs combo had been frowned upon by the girls in the office."* (Kelk, 2013, p. 24)

However, there are generally many more positive than negative references to fashion brands in chick lit, and even where a brand is written about in negative terms, authors are careful to avoid depicting branded products as dangerous or defective, as this could lead to legal issues (Fowler, 2010).

### 9.3.5 Care for Fashion Products

Given that fashion products are expensive and desirable, it is perhaps unsurprising that chick lit characters demonstrate some level of care for them after purchase. This is particularly true of Becky, who has a special cupboard built for her shoes:

> *"…I love my shoe cupboard. It is the best thing in the entire world! All my shoes are arranged in gorgeous rows, and there's even a built-in light so you can see them properly."* (Kinsella, 2004, p. 107)

Even when Becky, Luke and their baby stay with Becky's parents for several months, she prioritises storage space for her clothes:

> *"I've taken over the guestroom wardrobe too – plus I've arranged all my shoes on the bookshelves on the landing. (I put the books in boxes. No one ever read them, anyway.) I've put up a hanging rail in Dad's study, for coats and party dresses, and stacked some hat boxes in the utility room."* (Kinsella, 2010, p. 24)

Angela also tries to look after her designer fashion items (both her own and those that she has borrowed):

> *"I gently placed my Marc Jacobs bag on the side table…"*(Kelk, 2009, p. 41)

> *I passed her a shoe bag containing the borrowed Louboutins, freshly heeled and shined to perfection by the lovely man on the corner of North Eleventh and Berry.* (Kelk, 2011, p. 16)

But she is not always successful or consistent in her actions, with her fashion items frequently succumbing to everyday wear and tear:

> *"I couldn't even look after a handbag, I thought, stroking my beloved and nigh on destroyed Marc Jacobs satchel"* (Kelk, 2012, p. 17)

> *"I sniffed my black Kerrigan dress. Nope, couldn't get another wear out of that."* (Kelk, 2010a, p. 146)

Whereas Bridget and her friends do not appear to look after their fashion items very well at all:

> *"Shazzer's flat is tiny, and messy at the best of times […] but with two of them here the floor and every surface seems completely covered with Agent Provocateur bras, leopard skin ankle boots, Gucci carrier bags, faux Prada handbags, tiny Voyage cardigans and odd strappy shoes."* (Fielding, 1999, p. 180)

> *"Suddenly remember had Lycra mini-skirt on when returned home with Daniel last time. Go to living room. Triumphantly locate skirt between cushions on sofa."* (Fielding, 1996, p. 52)

Thus, whilst chick lit characters find fashion products expensive but desirable, once the item is in their possession, it often loses its novelty and importance. Becky appears to be an exception to this, despite the fact that her focus is supposed to be on shopping, rather than the products themselves, she clearly values and cares for those items which she buys.

### 9.3.6 Fashion and Appearance

As previously noted, the chick lit protagonist is focused on appearance (Montoro, 2012), and she chooses clothes which make her look good, often putting appearance before comfort:

> *'You do scrub up very well.' Louisa gave my gold sequinned BCBG shift dress an admiring nod. I did a spin, making sure I could get around in the obscenely high Brian Attwood heels I'd nicked from the fashion desk on my way out. I hadn't worn the shoes in an age and they were a risk but they made me look skinny so I couldn't really see what choice I had."* (Kelk, 2013, p. 69)

However, she is not always satisfied with her looks (Wells, 2006). Her main concerns centre on issues of weight, size and age, and these factors sometimes impact on her ability to wear the fashion items that she desires.

#### *9.3.6.1 Size and Weight*

Bridget Jones is famously obsessed by her weight, recording it on a daily basis in the first three *Bridget Jones* books. This obsession with weight, and her resulting negative body image, influences the way that she feels about buying fashion products. For example:

> *"I am never going in a communal changing room again. I got a dress stuck under my arms in Warehouse while trying to lift it off and ended up lurching around with inside-out fabric instead of a head, tugging at it with my arms in the air, rippling stomach and thighs on full display to the assembled sniggering fifteen-year-olds."* (Fielding, 1996, p. 66)

In *Bridget Jones: Mad About The Boy*, Bridget attends an obesity clinic and loses 40 pounds. She is excited to go into H&M and find that she has dropped multiple dress sizes:

> *"Glorious and historic day. Just went shopping to H&M and asked the assistant to bring me a 16 and she looked at me as if I was mad and said, 'You need a 14.' I scoffed, 'I'll never fit into a 14,' and she brought it, and it fitted. I am a 14!"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 43)

> *"Then went to H&M again to check size and am a 12."* (Fielding, 2013, p. 44)
>
> *"And to prove it, I just went to H&M again and I am a 10!"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 47)

This weight loss leads to her feeling much more confident about her body, which is reflected in her increased interest in fashion.

Commenting on the earlier *Shopaholic* novels, Dorney (2004) notes that Becky Bloomwood never worries about her weight, however in *Shopaholic and Baby* Becky struggles with her body image during pregnancy:

> *"It's too small. My perfect dress is too small. I must have grown some more. My bump, or my thighs, or somewhere. My whole body's suddenly got huge. I can feel my chin wobbling, but desperately clamp my lips shut. I am not going to cry. I wrench off the dress as best I can and head to the wardrobe to find something else. And then I glimpse myself in the mirror – and freeze. I'm waddling. I'm a white, fat, waddling . . . monstrosity."* (Kinsella, 2007)

This negative body image is compounded by her suspicions that her husband is having an affair with her obstetrician, and Becky gradually loses her confidence, unable to rely on her ability to use fashion to combat any problems.

Like Bridget, Angela Clark is conscious of her weight and size, having lost 20lbs through attending weight-loss classes prior to the wedding at the start of *I Heart New York*. She is a UK size 10-12 when she arrives in New York, but is excited to find that this translates to a US size 6-8

> *"Excitingly, I found out I was just a size 8 in America, reason enough to hang around a couple of weeks at least."* (Kelk, 2009, p. 29)

However, she still finds herself to be large in comparison to her new fashionable friends in New York:

> *"…the living room was artfully decorated with more clothes than you could find in your average Help the Aged. A cashmere sweater here, an Abercrombie hoodie there, seven Victoria's Secret thongs adding colour to the couch and an eye wateringly beautiful Jason Wu dress being used as a rug. It hurt my heart to look at it on the floor, just begging to be picked up, nicked and then never, ever worn, given that it was at least three sizes too small for me."* (Kelk, 2012, p. 26)

Angela sometimes favours certain fashion items because she believes that they make her look slimmer:

> *"…I was wearing the highest heels I owned, a pair of ankle-shattering Giuseppe Zanottis (purchased because they were on super sale and because Jenny said they made me look skinny …)"* (Kelk, 2013, p. 102)

And, like Becky, Angela struggles with dressing during pregnancy; however, overall, Angela seems relatively happy with her size. Whilst she sometimes compares herself to other, slimmer, characters,

it does not appear to make her overly anxious or self-conscious and does not significantly affect the way that she shops for fashion products.

#### *9.3.6.2 Age*

The typical chick lit heroine is relatively young, in her twenties or early thirties, so ageing is not usually a major issue for them; however, given chick lit characters' focus on outward appearance, concerns about age are sometimes raised. This is particularly true in the Bridget Jones series, which spans an extended period of time. Bridget is in her early thirties in *Bridget Jones's Diary* but is in her fifties in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*. In the latter novel she becomes self-conscious when she starts dating a younger man, and gets advice from a friend about how to avoid letting him see her naked:

> *"Go to Intimissimi or La Senza and get yourself a couple of little short black silk sexy slips. I think, when you were last doing this, they were called "petticoats". Or maybe one black, one white. With a slip, you can show off your arms and legs and décolletage, which are always the last to go, but keep the central area – which we might want to gloss over – glossed over. OK?'"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 126)

Unsurprisingly, as noted in the summative content analysis, Botox features highly in the list of brand names mentioned in all three series, and is treated fairly casually by chick lit characters:

> *"I mean, lots of people do Botox, don't they? It's not like having a facelift. 'Exactly,' said Talitha, when she gave me the number. 'It's just like going to the dentist!'"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 192)

> *"Hopefully Sadie had bought me Botox vouchers for Christmas. Again."* (Kelk, 2013, p. 119)

To a large extent, Botox is written about as if it is a normal response to ageing, however those characters who have had Botox are often written about negatively:

> *"I almost feel sorry for her real face, trapped under the Botox like a caged animal."* (Kinsella, 2007)

The only protagonist who has Botox as part of the story is Bridget Jones in *Mad About the Boy*, but she has a bad reaction to it and the romantic hero tells her that she looked fine without it:

> *"'I wouldn't do that again if I were you. You looked all right in the first place.'"* (Fielding, 2013, p. 194)

Thus, whilst Botox is written about as a fairly normal occurrence, it is not promoted within the narratives.

## 9.4 Language and Structural Techniques

It is interesting to look at the language and structural techniques used in conjunction with fashion products and brands in the text of chick lit novels.

### 9.4.1 Superlatives & Hyperbole

As previously noted, fashion brands are generally written about in a positive way in chick lit and this is highlighted by frequent use of superlatives and hyperbole when discussing fashion items. Each new piece is 'beautiful', 'stunning' or 'gorgeous' and better than anything else that the character has ever seen. The use of superlatives emphasises the importance of fashion products in the chick lit narrative, for example:

> *"It's a white and gold Temperley evening dress, in a shop called Fifty Percent Frocks. It has stunning embroidery around the neck and it sweeps to the floor and it looks like something straight off the red carpet […] This is the most beautiful dress in the world…"* (Kinsella, 2010, p. 175)

> *"Jenny was holding a very large, stiff bag from— oh, be still my beating heart— Marc Jacobs. … With a flourish, Jenny produced a stunning vibrant purple silk shirtdress. […] 'Jenny, it's beautiful,' I breathed, bounding across the room to get closer to the pretty, pretty dress." 'I don't think I've ever seen anything so amazing.'"*(Kelk, 2010a, p. 148)

Hyperbole is a common feature of comic fiction (Cuddon, 1991) and it is used to humorous effect in chick lit, but it also helps to justify the characters' impulse to buy the item. By using hyperbole, the writer makes the character's feelings about the fashion item seem remarkable and intense.

### 9.4.2 Visual Imagery

Chick lit authors often provide detailed descriptions of clothing. As well as identifying the brand, these vivid verbal sketches highlight style, colour, decoration and trims, helping readers to more clearly visualise the character or product being discussed. For example:

> *"Gaaah! Was my mother, walking into my café bold as brass in a Country Casuals pleated skirt and apple green blazer with shiny gold buttons..."* (Fielding, 1999, p. 11)

> *"I pressed my nose up against the window of Paul & Joe, lusting after a gorgeous grey silk dress […] It was short, silvery-grey with a white Siamese cat hand-painted on to the front."* (Kelk, 2010b, p. 61)

### 9.4.3 Tactile Imagery

Tactile imagery is also used to help the reader to imagine the sensation of touching or handling the product. It tends to focus on smooth, silky and soft textures emphasising the quality of the designer fashion pieces, for example:

> *"He handed me two giant slivers of buttery soft black leather. 'Are they Zanotti?'"* (Kelk, 2011, p. 93)

> "*Splendid–T-shirt dresses so soft they felt like clouds!"* (Kelk, 2009, p. 29)

### 9.4.4 Listing

In chick lit, fashion brands often appear together in lists, these include shopping lists, outfit lists, packing lists and lists of wardrobe contents, for example:

> *"Outfit – Balmain black sequinned dress with Zanotti crystal sandals and Philippe Audibert cuff? Roland Mouret turquoise dress with strappy Prada shoes? Azzaro red minidress and black Louboutins?"* (Kinsella, 2010, p. 60)

> "*I already had an olive green Roberto Rodriguez number, a yellow Phillip Lim 5.1 shift, black Kerrigan silk dress and half a dozen T-shirt dresses from Ella Moss, Splendid and James Perse hanging from the wall that Jenny had decreed were 'keepers'*." (Kelk, 2010a, p. 32)

Writers uses lists to add emphasis to a point. The lists of designer and luxury fashion items found in the *Shopaholic* and *I Heart* novels emphasise the characters' knowledge of fashion brands and thus their cultural capital. They help to bring the character to life through the sheer abundance of details pertaining to them (Nordquist, 2018). They also play to readers' hedonistic consumerist fantasies, highlighting the breadth and depth of the characters' wardrobes and their ability to buy seemingly endless quantities of new fashion items.

Lists also serve to offer a variety of examples with the likelihood that the reader will be familiar with at least one of them. Therefore, listing may be a device used to ensure that all readers, including those who aren't overly familiar with fashion brands, can recognise at least one brand in order to get a sense of the list as a whole.

### 9.4.5 Personification

In the Introduction, it was discussed that Angela's Marc Jacobs handbag is more notable to readers of the *I Heart* series than most of the secondary characters. It is her constant companion throughout the series and is frequently written about as if it is a character in itself. She ascribes human feelings and characteristics to the bag, and even talks to it on occasion, for example:

> *"'No, don't worry,' I whispered to my Marc Jacobs. 'I'm not replacing you.'"* (Kelk, 2012, p. 120)

However, personification of fashion items is not restricted to Angela's bag. In Bridget Jones's Diary, Bridget and Daniel Cleaver flirt over the intra-office messaging system, chatting about Bridget's short skirt as if it was another employee:

> *"Message Jones If skirt is indeed sick, please look into how many days sick leave skirt has taken in previous twelve month. Spasmodic nature of recent skirt attendance suggests malingering. Cleave"* (Fielding, 1996, p. 21)

Baudrillard discusses idealised consumption, which he suggests is based on the substitution of human relationships by a "*'personalised' relationship to objects.*" (Baudrillard, 2005, p. 204). He cites Martineau (1957), who describes the buying process as an interaction between the personality of the buyer and the personality of the product itself. Thus Baudrillard argues that products have become "complex beings" in themselves, resulting in the interaction between person and object in the consumption process being treated as equivalent to a human relationship (Baudrillard, 2005). The personification of fashion items in chick lit helps to highlight their importance in the narrative and the strength of their relationship to the character.

### 9.4.6 Metaphor

Chick lit characters sometimes use fashion brands in metaphors when they are trying to explain complex issues to others. For example, when Becky is on morning TV trying to explain a complicated financial scam to the clueless host, she relates it to the purchase of a Nicole Farhi coat, and similarly, when Angela is trying to persuade Jenny that she should wait until she is in a relationship rather than have a baby with her gay friend James, she tries to explain her reasoning using Jenny's desire for a Hermès Birkin:

> *"'It's just like that time you wanted that Hermès Birkin.' I was clutching at straws but I had to try to explain what I meant in a language she would understand. 'Remember? You were saving and saving and you got halfway and then you couldn't be arsed to save anymore so you bought a knock-off and pissed all the money away. But you weren't happy with the knock-off, not really. You still really wanted that Birkin.'"* (Kelk, 2013, p. 121)

The implication here is that fashion brands and fashion consumption experiences are something that everyone can understand and relate to; fashion is a 'language' that is understood by all chick lit characters.

## 9.5 Use of Fictional Brands

As mentioned in Chapter 6, sometimes authors create fictional brands to use in their novels rather than use real brand names, and there have been cases where brands created for fictional works are later produced and sold for actual consumption (Muzellec et al., 2012, 2014; Patwardhan & Patwardhan, 2016; Reading & Jenkins, 2015). Evidence suggests that despite having no experience of the brand in real life, readers may develop positive attitudes towards these fictional brands (Muzellec et al., 2014; Patwardhan & Patwardhan, 2016) and they may possess strong consumer based brand equity (Muzellec et al., 2012). For the most part, the chick lit novels in the corpus use real-life brand names, particularly in relation to fashion products and retail stores; however, there are some exceptions.

In the *Bridget Jones* series, most of the brands mentioned are real, but fictional names are used for some plot elements, for example Bridget's TV Show (*Sit Up Britain*). Similarly, in the *I Heart Series*, Angela works for a fictional publishing company (*Spencer Media*) and writes for several fictional magazines (*The Look, Belle and Gloss*); and in the *Shopaholic* series, Becky works for a fictional magazine (*Successful Saving*), a fictional TV Show (*Morning Coffee*) and later for a fictional department store in London (*The Look*). The use of fictional employers would appear to be a common device in chick lit, where the characters' careers are often central to the story, and workplace incidents and co-workers are used as a source of comedy. By using fictional companies and brands, the author avoids any potential libel accusations. It is perhaps more unusual that Kinsella has chosen to use real-life New York department store, Barneys, as one of Becky's employers; however, this does not appear to have had any negative consequences for either the author or the store.

In terms of fictional fashion brands, the three authors take different approaches. All of the fashion brands mentioned in the *Bridget Jones* series are real-life brands. The vast majority of fashion brands mentioned in the *I Heart* series are also real, the only significant exceptions being the wedding dresses worn by Angela and Jenny, which are both made by fictional designers. However, the *Shopaholic* series makes use of several fictional fashion brands, including *Denny and George, Ally Smith* and *Angel*. For the most part, these fictional brands are used in the narrative in exactly the same way as real brand names, so it becomes difficult to tell which brands are real and which are fictional if you are not an avid fashion fan. For example, in her content analysis of chick lit and lad lit books, Dorney (2004, p. 19) counts the appearance of *Denny and George* in the same way that she does real fashion brands.

An analysis of the use of fictional fashion brands in the *Shopaholic* series suggests that Kinsella chooses to use a fictional brand name where the item is (a) particularly distinctive, and (b) closely integrated into the plot. For example, the *Denny and George* scarf is linked to Becky's relationship with Luke: she borrows £20 from him at a press conference, saying that she needs it to buy a present for her sick aunt; he then catches her wearing it at a restaurant, and later buys it back for her when she has to auction her belongings to pay her debts in *Shopaholic Abroad*. Similarly, the *Angel* Bag is an 'it bag' that Becky simply has to have when she sees it in Milan. When a stranger helps her to bypass the waiting list for the bag, she owes him a favour which results in Luke having to handle the PR for his new hotel. By using fictional brands for these distinctive products, it may avoid the issue of dating the novel when the products or brands are no longer fashionable. Given the high level of plot integration for these items, fictional brands may also be used to avoid having an undue commercial influence on readers.

The other fictional fashion brand which appears frequently in the *Shopaholic* books is *Danny Kovitz*. Danny is a fledgling fashion designer when he first appears as Becky and Luke's neighbour in New York. Becky helps him to get his designs stocked in Barney's and he later goes on to design Becky's wedding dress. He fulfils the chick lit character archetype of Becky's gay male friend throughout the *Shopaholic* series; and when he becomes a famous fashion designer helps her out with her career as a personal shopper at *The Look* (producing an exclusive collaboration for the store) and her short-lived career as a Hollywood stylist (lending her client a dress for a red-carpet event). Using a fictional fashion designer to support Becky in this way makes the plot more credible (and less likely to date) than it would be if Becky was helped by a real-life fashion designer.

## 9.6 Summary

The qualitative content analysis has shown that the three chick lit protagonists in this study are quite different in terms of their relationship with fashion brands and consumption. Bridget is a budget conscious fashion shopper, favouring high street brands. She is not very confident in her fashion choices, often turning to magazines and friends for advice, and relies on one or two key pieces in her wardrobe. Whilst she frequently buys fashion items, she does not appear to particularly value or care for them. Becky is very different. She is a confident fashion shopper, who favours designer and luxury brands and often goes into debt to pay for her shopping habit. She is a fashion expert, who knows which brands to buy and how to put them together to create an outfit. Although her main focus is shopping, she appears to value and look after the fashion products that she buys. Angela sits somewhere between the other two protagonists in terms of fashion knowledge and consumption. When she first moves to New York she initially relies on fashion advice from a friend, but over the course of the series she gains confidence in her own fashion choices and uses designer fashion brands to construct a new identity for herself. She values the designer fashion products that she buys and makes an initial effort to look after them, but she is not particularly precious about them and they often succumb to the wear and tear of everyday life.

There are a number of common themes running through all three series. Firstly, fashion brands are used by chick lit characters to construct and re-construct their identity. Fashion choices and brands are viewed as something which can define a person and change their life; and outfits are carefully planned to communicate specific messages, drawing on the symbolic power of fashion brands. Secondly, there is a recognition that fashion is expensive. Chick lit characters often go into debt to pay for their fashion, justifying expensive fashion purchases as investments, however they try to mitigate the cost of fashion consumption by bargain hunting, borrowing and sharing. Thirdly, fashion brands are generally written about in positive terms within chick lit. They are viewed as objects of desire and

sources of excitement and pleasure. The use of superlatives, hyperbole and visual and tactile imagery help to support positive descriptions of fashion products. On the rare occasions that fashion brands are written about negatively, it is usually where characters are judging one another's fashion choices. Finally, chick lit characters are focused on appearance. They use fashion to make themselves look good and feel confident; however, they sometimes have concerns about their weight, size and age. These factors impact on what they can wear and thus their feelings about their appearance.

Literary techniques such as the listing of fashion brands, the personification of fashion items and the use of fashion brands in metaphors, help to emphasise the importance of fashion brands and products in chick lit narratives.

As a final point, the textual analysis shows that most of the brand names used in the chick lit corpus belong to real-life brands, however there are some exceptions, notably for the characters' employers, which are all fictional companies. The *Shopaholic* series is a little different to the other two in this respect, as it uses several fictional fashion brand names alongside real fashion brand names. These fictional brands are usually associated with highly plot-integrated items.

# Chapter 10: Results of the Author Survey

## 10.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the author survey. It addresses the following objectives of the study:

- To investigate why authors use fashion brand names in novels.
- To extrapolate the potential commercial benefits of fashion brand product placement in novels.

Survey invitations were sent to 388 authors listed on the chicklitclub.com website. Each author had at least one published novel reviewed on the website. A total of 166 valid responses to the survey were received, representing a response rate of 43%.

The survey invitation included a reply email address for any respondent queries, and several authors used this to provide additional comments and opinions by email. Where relevant, these comments are also discussed as part of the survey results.

## 10.2 Genre

The first question asked respondents how they would describe the genre(s) of the novels that they write. In part this was to check whether respondents were indeed chick lit authors, but also to find out whether they wrote in any other genres.

**Table 10.1** *Genre*

| | | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
| Genre[a] | Literary Fiction | 51 | 16.2% | 30.7% |
| | Crime, Thriller, Horror | 22 | 7.0% | 13.3% |
| | Sci-fi, Fantasy | 4 | 1.3% | 2.4% |
| | Romance | 60 | 19.0% | 36.1% |
| | Chick Lit | 85 | 27.0% | 51.2% |
| | Historical, Mythological | 16 | 5.1% | 9.6% |
| | Young Adult | 12 | 3.8% | 7.2% |
| | Children's Fiction | 3 | 1.0% | 1.8% |
| | Other | 62 | 19.7% | 37.3% |
| Total | | 315 | 100.0% | 189.8% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

As might be expected given the source of the sample, the largest group of respondents (51.2% of cases) indicated that they wrote chick lit; this was closely followed by romance (36.1% of cases). As discussed in Chapter 4, chick lit can be categorised as a form of romantic fiction, however, clearly authors see distinctions between these genres and their conventions in relation to brand name usage, for example, one respondent stated:

> *"I wrote chick lit in the past and more heavily used fashion brands then but still like to use them in my romances."*

62 respondents (37.3% of cases) selected "other". The genres mentioned under "other" included: women's fiction (21 respondents), commercial or popular fiction (14 respondents), contemporary fiction (6 respondents) and comedy/romantic comedy (7 respondents) – all of these descriptions are applied to chick lit in the academic literature. There was some indication that authors don't necessarily appreciate their work being classified as chick lit. One author stated that she wrote commercial fiction/domestic drama, and said:

> *"...Chick Lit and Romance are demeaning and I know very few authors who'd categorise their work thus"*

This echoes some of the comments and criticisms mentioned in the literature review, suggesting that many authors dislike the label "chick lit" (e.g. Day & Perry, 2011).

All of the authors had at least one published book reviewed on www.chicklitclub.com. This website defines chick lit broadly as:

> *"Chick lit is a popular genre of contemporary fiction that focuses on the transformational journey of a woman or group of women. Storylines cover the many phases of life, from starting a career, dating, moving to a new location, marriage, motherhood, mid-life transitions, divorce and death. Romance is a common element but is not the sole focus of the book - work, family or personal issues play a big part. Often these novels are humorous, while its writers don't shy away from the serious issues."* (chicklitclub.com, n.d.)

Each of the respondents met the requirements for being reviewed or listed on this website, therefore none of the cases were excluded from subsequent analysis.

## 10.3 Use of Fashion Brand Names

**Table 10.2** *Do you ever use real life fashion brand names in your work?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Yes | 143 | 86.1 | 86.1 | 86.1 |
| | No | 23 | 13.9 | 13.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 166 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

A total of 143 of the 166 respondents (86.1%) said that they used real-life fashion brand names in their work. This figure demonstrates the widespread use of fashion brand names in women's fiction, however it may be that the figure is artificially high, as several authors replied to the survey invitation to say that they didn't use any fashion brands and therefore they did not think that their responses would be useful, e.g.

> *"I had a quick look at the questions. I cannot remember if I have ever mentioned fashion brand names in my novels so I don't think I can be any use to you."*

Some of the authors who didn't use fashion brand names explained their reasons. Several said that they did not know much about fashion and therefore they did not use fashion brands in their work:

> *"…I'm totally dyslexic about fashion, brands, and everything related to them."*

> *"I'm probably the least fashionable person I know. I don't wear any brands myself, most of my wardrobe consists of clothes from Sainsbury's, Asda or Amazon and so consequently fashionable brands are never mentioned in any of my books and clothes in general are rarely mentioned other than occasionally my heroine might be wearing a blue dress or something like that."*

Another felt that a description of the clothing itself was enough, and the addition of a brand name was unnecessary:

> *"I never use brand names at all… The reason I don't is because I think the description of the clothes--like a ripped pair of jeans--tells us enough, and if I wrote a ripped pair of Prada jeans, it would make me want to smack the character!"*

One was concerned that the use of real brand names would mean that they would be seen as advertising the brands:

> *"I also don't like to use brand names in my fiction because I don't want to be seen as advertising for a brand. It's more fun to make up names anyway."*

Whilst several explained that they avoid the use of brand names because it might date their work, for example:

> *"I make a point not to use current brand names in the hopes of not dating my fiction."*

> *"I don't do it because I think it immediately dates the novel."*

This is an issue that was raised during the textual analysis, as some of the brand names in the earlier *Bridget Jones* and *Shopaholic* novels were now defunct, dating the novels to an extent.

### 10.3.1 Types of fashion brand names used

The majority of those respondents who did use fashion brand names, used a mixture of both luxury/designer and high street brands. This is a common feature of chick lit, which tends to balance

the use of aspirational designer brands with some familiar high street names so that the average reader can still identify with the characters.

**Table 10.3** *What type of fashion brand names do you use?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Luxury & designer brands | 26 | 15.7 | 18.2 | 18.2 |
| | High street brands | 20 | 12.0 | 14.0 | 32.2 |
| | Both | 97 | 58.4 | 67.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 143 | 86.1 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | No Response | 23 | 13.9 | | |
| Total | | 166 | 100.0 | | |

### 10.3.2 Reasons for using fashion brand names

Respondents were asked why they chose to use real fashion brands in their work. The most common answer (89.7% of cases) was to support characterisation. As explained in the literature review, there seems to be an implicit understanding that brand names are used to support characterisation in fiction, yet there appears to be no previous academic research in this area.

Two of the respondents taught creative writing, and both confirmed that students were taught about the use of clothing and brand names in characterisation:

> *"Only this week I taught a writing workshop using clothing as a mechanism for characterisation."*

> *"I also teach creative writing here (Simon Fraser University) ... I frequently talk with students about the importance of brands in setting reader expectations etc. Not only what the character chooses to wear/buy but in what they think of it."*

Some respondents emphasised the use of fashion brand names in communicating the character's social class or economic situation:

> *"It gives a sense of the character's economic situation and their style which helps to bring them to life."*

Another said:

> *"I believe the clothing we choose says so much about what we want to project as our image (either intentionally or not) so if I describe someone as someone who is a walking catalogue model for Marks and Spencer versus Burberry, it sets an idea in the reader's mind."*

One author agreed that brand names are useful to support characterisation, but expressed some caution about their over-use:

> *"It's an easy shorthand to telegraph who a character is, but overusing it becomes lazy writing. (Remember the glitz and glamor books of the 1980s.)"*

Another key reason given for using fashion brand names was to help the reader to visualise the character or scene more clearly (68.9% of cases). One respondent explained how she carefully crafts the "look" of each of her characters:

> *"I LOVE fashion and fashion is a very important part of making the characters come to life in my books. Each heroine has a distinctive "look" represented by brands and styles. (I even go into purses/handbags, fragrances, and lipstick shades.)"*

The other significant reason given was to add a degree of realism (also 68.9% of cases). Although writing more generally about the use of real places and retail outlets in novels, one of the respondents explained that creating realistic settings helps to engage the reader:

> *"I write a lot about the Charleston Lowcountry in South Carolina and people love and want to know about real hotels and shops and restaurants; many actually visit those places. I think it's a way for them to bond with the story and experience the setting for themselves."*

The other suggested reasons were less popular but included: to reflect the historical setting of the novel (18.6%), to reflect the geographical setting of the novel (17.2%), to appeal to the reader's love of fashion (also 17.2%) and because the author herself liked to wear the brands that she wrote about (15.2%).

Several of the respondents wrote historical fiction and some commented on the use of fashion brands to evoke particular historical periods:

> *"…one of the ways in which fashion brands in particular are useful to name is because they are so often shorthand. Chanel, Gucci, Armani, etc. = luxury. Halston = 70's. Giorgio and Dior's Poison perfume = 80's. These mentions can bring a rush of memory and atmosphere to a reader (especially perfumes), much more so than, say, a car brand."*

> *"I don't do a whole lot of historical research to create the time and setting for my novels. Two out of four of my novels were set in a time that I didn't live in, yet in all four of my novels I have found using all brands during the period the story is set (particularly clothing and accessories) to be the best way to draw the reader into post WWII Charleston high society or a women's college in 1953."*

Other reasons given for using real fashion brand names in novels included as a reflection of culture:

> *"To reflect popular culture."*

> *"To include fashion and textiles as a social and cultural document."*

Whilst one author stated that she had deliberately used fashion brands to convey a sense of commodity fetish:

*"In my first novel… the listing of fashion brands works to create an overwhelming obsession of commodity fetish; it's not exactly positive."*

And another said that she used fashion brand names for comedic purposes:

*"…for laughs: if a character farts, it's funnier in a Zac Posen teddy."*

Therefore, there are many reasons why authors use real fashion brand names in their novels, but the primary reason is to support characterisation.

**Table 10.4** *Why do you use real-life fashion brand names in your work?*

| | | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
| Why do you use fashion brand names?[a] | To add a sense of realism | 99 | 22.7% | 68.3% |
| | To support characterisation | 130 | 29.7% | 89.7% |
| | To help the reader visualise the character or scene more clearly | 99 | 22.7% | 68.3% |
| | To reflect the geographical setting of the novel | 25 | 5.7% | 17.2% |
| | To reflect the historical setting of the novel | 27 | 6.2% | 18.6% |
| | To appeal to reader's love of fashion | 25 | 5.7% | 17.2% |
| | I like or wear the brands myself | 22 | 5.0% | 15.2% |
| | Other | 10 | 2.3% | 6.9% |
| Total | | 437 | 100.0% | 301.4% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

### 10.3.3 Use of fictional fashion brand names

Respondents were asked if they ever made up their own fashion brand names to use in their work, and if so, in which circumstances they would use a fictional fashion brand over a real-life fashion brand.

**Table 10.5** *Do you ever make up your own fashion brand names to use in your work?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Yes | 47 | 28.3 | 28.5 | 28.5 |
| | No | 118 | 71.1 | 71.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 165 | 99.4 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | No Response | 1 | .6 | | |
| Total | | 166 | 100.0 | | |

The majority of respondents (71.5%) did not make up their own fictional fashion brands. Those who did (28.5%), gave multiple reasons.

The most commonly cited reason (mentioned 24 times) was that a fictional brand name was more appropriate if the fashion brand was central to the plot, e.g. if the main character was a fashion designer or worked for a fashion company. For example:

> *"If the brand was part of the storyline (i.e. if a character worked for a brand, etc.)"*
>
> *"If it was part of the world building for the book."*
>
> *"I don't think I've made up a brand yet, but in an upcoming book, by heroine is a fashion designer, so I will probably invent her own label. I think that's the only circumstance in which I would invent a brand--when I'm inventing a fashion house for the story."*

The second most commonly cited reason (mentioned 18 times) was that a fictional brand was preferable where something in the narrative might reflect negatively on the brand, potentially leading to legal issues. For example:

> *"… if someone's outfit falls apart I wouldn't use a real brand product because I might get a lawsuit!"*
>
> *"If I were concerned that there was something unflattering about a brand (i.e. that they used slave labor etc.) that I didn't want to get into a legal battle over…"*
>
> *"If the characters were highly critical of the brand/product or if the owners of a company were unscrupulous."*
>
> *"When a certain brand has a negative connotation to it in my story, I use something fictional, to avoid any legal issues."*
>
> *"When spoofing or making fun of a brand, to avoid being libellous."*

Another key reason (mentioned 7 times) was that a fictional brand might be necessary to align with a plot point in the story. For example:

> *"If a plot point depends on the name of the product to align with the story."*
>
> *"Where it fits better with the story I'm telling, giving more flexibility."*
>
> *"I set a scene at the Paris Ready to Wear collections for a novel. I didn't think my character would believably have access to a known designer name show, so I made up a name of what I imagined would be a lesser-known designer."*

Two respondents suggested that they used fictional brands to avoid evoking readers' preconceptions of real-life brands:

> *"I try to only ever use fictional brands for everything, as far as I'm aware—I am conscious that brand names have different implications for different readers so I try to avoid them."*

> *"I just feel a fiction writer builds a world, and so making up a brand name adds to the fictional world without sort of removing the reader from it and plunking him or her down into the real world, where marketing and brand names carry a specific, transient caché."*

Other reasons suggested for using fictional brand names included where a fictional brand name was better for comedic purposes, where there was no real-life equivalent for a product or brand, or when writing for children.

### 10.3.4 Choice of specific brands

In order to better understand why authors chose to use specific fashion brand names, respondents were asked to rate the importance of a series of factors when choosing a fashion brand name to include in their work.

A key factor appears to be that the brand has a natural congruency with the character. 123 respondents out of 143 (86%) felt that this was important. This ties in with the authors' reasons for using fashion brands in their work, discussed in section 10.3.2, where "to support characterisation" was the most frequently chosen option.

Interestingly "the brand has its own unique personality" also scored highly, with 103 out of 145 respondents (71%) rating this as important. Given the use of fashion brands to support characterisation, this would appear to indicate that authors might choose brands whose brand personalities are congruent with the character's personality.

Similarly, "the brand has a distinctive look" was rated as important by 91 out of 144 respondents (63%), this also supports the findings in section 10.3.2, where authors indicated that they used fashion brands to help the reader visualise the character or scene more clearly.

Another key factor appears to be that the brand is one that is already well known to readers, 127 of 146 respondents (87%) felt that this was fairly or extremely important. Given the authors' use of fashion brands to support characterisation, it makes sense that readers have to be aware of a brand for it to make a significant contribution to their perception of a character. This ties in with the correspondingly low scores for "the brand is new to the market" and "the brand is a niche brand that only real fashion fans would recognise". Thus, whilst academic research suggests that novels might be an appropriate product placement medium for new brands (Olsen & Lanseng, 2012; Storm & Stoller, 2014), it would appear that authors prefer to use well-known fashion brands in their work.

**Table 10.6** *How important are the following factors when you are choosing a fashion brand name to include in your work?*

| | Not at all important Count | Fairly unimportant Count | Neither important or unimportant Count | Fairly important Count | Extremely important Count | Total Count |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The brand has a very distinctive look | 17 | 4 | 32 | 53 | 38 | 144 |
| The brand has its own unique "personality" | 13 | 3 | 26 | 54 | 49 | 145 |
| The brand is already well known to readers | 6 | 7 | 6 | 60 | 67 | 146 |
| The brand is new to the market | 109 | 10 | 18 | 2 | 2 | 141 |
| The brand is a niche brand that only real fashion fans would recognise | 96 | 15 | 19 | 6 | 4 | 140 |
| The brand is something that my readers probably already buy/wear themselves | 53 | 14 | 34 | 34 | 6 | 141 |
| The brand is something that my readers aspire to buy/wear | 57 | 9 | 31 | 35 | 10 | 142 |
| The brand is frequently mentioned in other novels | 113 | 2 | 17 | 8 | 1 | 141 |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the character | 6 | 1 | 13 | 41 | 82 | 143 |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the geographical setting | 43 | 11 | 35 | 29 | 22 | 140 |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the historical period | 36 | 5 | 28 | 30 | 33 | 132 |

Although, strictly speaking, a rating scale such as this produces only ordinal data, it is common practice in marketing research to analyse data from this type of scale using a comparison of means (e.g. Karrh et al., 2003). If we take this approach, we can see that the only other characteristic with a mean greater

than 3.0 (which represents the mid-point of the scale) is "the brand has a natural congruency with the historical period"; 63 out of 132 respondents (48%) indicated that this was important.

**Table 10.7** *Reasons for using a particular brand name*

| | N | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | Missing | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| The brand has a very distinctive look | 144 | 22 | 3.63 | 1.239 |
| The brand has its own unique "personality" | 145 | 21 | 3.85 | 1.180 |
| The brand is already well known to readers | 146 | 20 | 4.20 | 1.015 |
| The brand is new to the market | 141 | 25 | 1.43 | 0.872 |
| The brand is a niche brand that only real fashion fans would recognise | 140 | 26 | 1.62 | 1.056 |
| The brand is something that my readers probably already buy/wear themselves | 141 | 25 | 2.48 | 1.323 |
| The brand is something that my readers aspire to buy/wear | 142 | 24 | 2.52 | 1.408 |
| The brand is frequently mentioned in other novels | 141 | 25 | 1.45 | 0.960 |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the character | 143 | 23 | 4.34 | 0.979 |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the geographical setting | 140 | 26 | 2.83 | 1.459 |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the historical period | 132 | 34 | 3.14 | 1.534 |

Readers' relationship with the brand isn't considered particularly important by authors. Only 45 out of 142 (32%) respondents felt that it was important that the brand was something that their readers aspire to buy/wear; and only 40 out of 141 (28%) thought that it was important that the brand was something that their readers might already buy/wear themselves. So, it would appear that fashion brands aren't necessarily used to help the reader to identify with the character.

## 10.4 Readers' Reactions to the Use of Fashion Brand Names

In the Introduction to this thesis, it was noted that a number of readers had commented on social media about the brands mentioned in Lindsey Kelk's *I Heart* novels.

Respondents were asked whether their readers ever commented on the use of fashion brand names in their work.

**Table 10.8** *Do your readers ever comment on the use of fashion brand names in your work?*

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Yes | 44 | 26.5 | 26.8 | 26.8 |
| | No | 120 | 72.3 | 73.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 164 | 98.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | No Response | 2 | 1.2 | | |
| Total | | 166 | 100.0 | | |

44 out of 164 respondents (26.8%) said that readers did comment on their use of fashion brand names. One respondent noted:

> *"Some readers HATE fashion details-others LOVE them. Like I've been dinged in reviews for mentioning the fashions, so it's very interesting how people react to them in a story."*

## 10.5 Incidence of Product Placement

In Chapter 6 a number of examples of paid product placement in novels were identified, including some in chick lit novels, however, it was not clear whether commercial product placement is a common occurrence in this medium.

Respondents were asked whether they had ever been paid a fee (financial incentive) to include a specific brand name in their books. 165 respondents answered this question, and all of them said that they had never been paid a fee to include a specific brand name in any of their novels. Therefore, we can safely conclude that paid product placement is not a common occurrence in chick lit novels.

Some authors commented on the idea of paid product placement. One said that she did not think that readers would accept paid product placements:

> *"No one wants a sponsored romance novel."*

Whilst others indicated an interest in paid product placement but said that they had not come across it personally. For example:

> *"I wish. I think this should be a thing, but I've only ever heard of Fay Weldon being paid by Bulgari years ago."*
>
> *"This has never happened but how amazing would that be? Haha"*
>
> *"I may have to get on to my agent about this!"*

*"I know brand placement in movies here in the states is prevalent in many films, particularly summer block busters. So, if authors are receiving compensation for brand placement in their novels, good for them!"*

In Chapter 6 it was noted that, even in movies and TV, financial payments represent only part of the total product placement market, with many placements taking the form of a barter arrangement, whereby the brand owner does not pay for the placement, but simply supplies the products to the production company for free in return for an appearance in the film or show. Therefore, respondents were asked if they had ever accepted another type of incentive (e.g. free products) to include a specific brand name in their books.

163 respondents answered this question. None of them had ever accepted an incentive from a fashion brand, but 5 (3.1%) had accepted an incentive from another type of brand.

**Table 10.9** *Have you ever accepted another type of incentive (e.g. free products) to include a specific brand name in your books?*

| | | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
| Have you ever accepted another incentive[a] | Yes – a fashion brand | 0 | 0% | 0% |
| | Yes – another type of brand | 5 | 3.1% | 3.1% |
| | No | 158 | 96.9% | 96.9% |
| Total | | 163 | 100.0% | 100.0% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

One said:

*"I write a lot about wine, and my publisher negotiated wine from a maker be donated to a few book signings. But I did not receive a fee and did not write the brand for free stuff. They asked to donate and she gave them a way to do so."*

Finally, respondents were asked whether they had ever been gifted with free products by a brand that had been featured in one of their books after the book had been published. This appeared to be a slightly more common occurrence, with 3 respondents (1.8%) indicating that they had been given gifts by a fashion brand and 7 respondents (4.2%) indicating that they had been given gifts by another type of brand.

**Table 10.10** *Have you ever been gifted with free products by a brand that you have featured in one of your books after the book has been published?*

| | | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
| Have you been given gifts afterwards?[a] | Yes - by a fashion brand | 3 | 1.8% | 1.8% |
| | Yes - by another type of brand | 7 | 4.2% | 4.3% |
| | No | 156 | 94.0% | 95.1% |
| Total | | 166 | 100.0% | 101.2% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

One author commented that she had previously tried to get free or discounted products by mentioning a brand in a novel, but had been unsuccessful:

> *"Fifteen years ago, when I co-wrote a novel with a friend, she was hopeful of mentioning the local wine suppliers and getting free/discounted booze for the book launch – sadly we failed."*

Whilst another suggested that it had never occurred to her that she might be able to get free products by mentioning brands in her novels, but perhaps this might be more common amongst younger authors:

> *"I never personally thought about using product placement to get free products. Maybe you should have included an age for the author to tick. I think although we write books about thirty something heroines us older authors are less tuned in to the potential of product placement. Mine are definitely in there to help with authenticity and characterisation and for purposes of humour."*

These results indicate a small amount of commercial interest in brand name mentions in books, but chick lit novels do not appear to be perceived as a significant promotional medium by brand owners.

## 10.6 Summary

The survey has confirmed that chick lit authors primarily use fashion brand names in their novels to support characterisation, add realism and help the reader to visualise a character or scene more easily. They prefer to use well-known brand names with unique brand personalities and a distinctive "look". Commercial product placement does not appear to be used to any significant extent in this medium, although authors may occasionally receive free products or gifts in response to brand mentions in their novels.

# Chapter 11: Results of the Consumer Survey

## 11.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the consumer survey. It addresses the following objectives of the study:

- To critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels.
- To measure the impact of fashion brand placement in novels in terms of: (i) brand recall; and (ii) brand attitudes
- To identify reader attitudes towards brand placement in novels
- To extrapolate the potential commercial benefits of fashion brand product placement in novels.

The consumer survey was administered in class to two groups of fashion marketing students at the University of Leeds. This approach yielded a total of 96 valid completed questionnaires. A full set of frequency data for the consumer questionnaire can be found in Appendix J.

## 11.2 Sample Profile

All of the respondents were female and aged between 18 and 24 years old, so they fit the demographic profile of chick lit readers.

76 of the respondents (79.2%) had read at least one fiction book within the preceding 12 months. This is consistent with the Mintel's 2019 survey of Books and ebooks which found that 77% of UK females aged 16-24 had read a book in the past 12 months (Mintel, 2019).

The most common book format amongst respondents was the traditional physical printed book (70.8% of respondents had read a physical fiction book within the past year).

In terms of genre, romance appeared to be the most popular amongst respondents, with 43 (45.3%) having read a romance novel within the past 12 months. Other popular genres were general or literary fiction (40.0% of respondents) and crime, thriller and horror novels (31.6% of respondents).

**Table 11.1** *Reading Habits*

| | | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
| Reading in the last 12 months[a] | Read a physical print fiction book (paperback or hardback) | 68 | 50.0% | 70.8% |
| | Read a fiction book on an e-reader | 8 | 5.9% | 8.3% |
| | Read a fiction book on a tablet | 10 | 7.4% | 10.4% |
| | Read a fiction book on a laptop | 15 | 11.0% | 15.6% |
| | Read a fiction book on a smartphone | 14 | 10.3% | 14.6% |
| | Read a fiction book on a desktop computer | 1 | 0.7% | 1.0% |
| | None of these | 20 | 14.7% | 20.8% |
| Total | | 136 | 100.0% | 141.7% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Table 11.2** *Genres Read*

| | | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
| Genres read in the past 12 months[a] | General or literary fiction | 38 | 25.2% | 40.0% |
| | Crime, thriller, horror | 30 | 19.9% | 31.6% |
| | Science fiction, fantasy | 8 | 5.3% | 8.4% |
| | Graphic novel | 1 | 0.7% | 1.1% |
| | Romance | 43 | 28.5% | 45.3% |
| | Historical, mythological | 11 | 7.3% | 11.6% |
| | None of these | 20 | 13.2% | 21.1% |
| Total | | 151 | 100.0% | 158.9% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

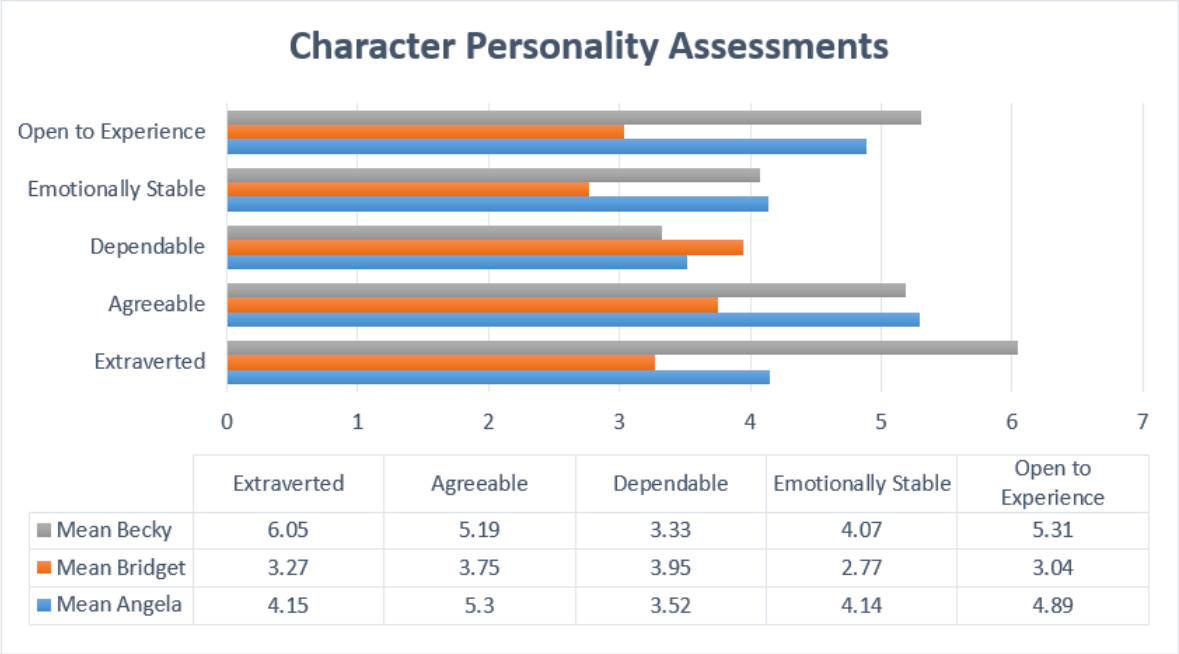
## 11.3 Character and Brand Personality

A key objective of this research is to examine the relationship between character personality and fashion brand personality in selected chick lit novels, therefore respondents were asked to read a short excerpt from each of the chick lit series selected and make assessments of the protagonist's personality and the personality of key brands mentioned in the text.

### 11.3.1 Character personality assessments

The chart below summarises the respondents' assessments of each characters' personality, according to the Big Five Personality Dimensions.

**Figure 11.1** *Character Personality Assessments*




| | Extraverted | Agreeable | Dependable | Emotionally Stable | Open to Experience |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Becky | 6.05 | 5.19 | 3.33 | 4.07 | 5.31 |
| Mean Bridget | 3.27 | 3.75 | 3.95 | 2.77 | 3.04 |
| Mean Angela | 4.15 | 5.3 | 3.52 | 4.14 | 4.89 |

Becky is considered to be very extraverted and open to experience, agreeable and quite emotionally stable. Angela has a similar personality assessment, although she is considered to be significantly less extraverted than Becky. Conversely, Bridget scores significantly lower than the other two characters on all dimensions, other than dependability.

### 11.3.2 Brand personality assessments

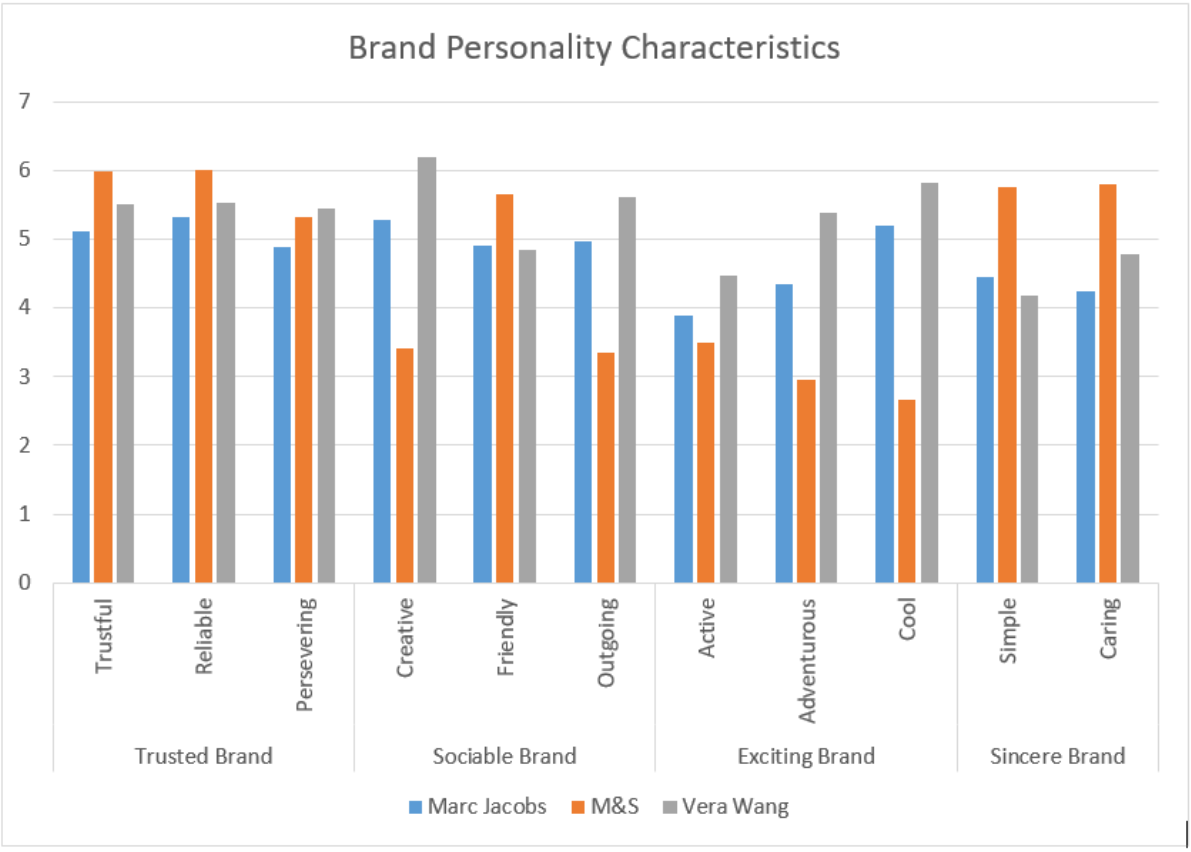
In each of the excerpts presented in the questionnaire, the character was closely associated with a particular fashion brand. Table 11.3 summarises these associations.

**Table 11.3** *Character – Brand Associations*

| Character | Brand | Association in the text |
|---|---|---|
| Angela | Marc Jacobs | "'Marc Jacobs?' I offered... It seemed to be the right answer because she smiled and finished off the collection of luxury leather in front of her with the most beautiful, beautiful bag I had ever laid eyes on. I reached out to stroke its buttery softness, the dark brown of the leather looked like milk chocolate and the subtle gold detailing winked at me. 'Buy me,' it whispered tantalizingly. 'I complete you.'" |
| Bridget | Marks & Spencer | [I] "buy things from Marks & Spencer because I don't have to try them on, and at least I've bought something" |
| Becky | Vera Wang | "That Vera Wang dress. Inky purple, with a low back and glittering straps. It just looked so completely movie-star perfect....I just stared at myself, mesmerized. Entranced by what I could look like; by the person I could be. There was no question. I had to have it." |

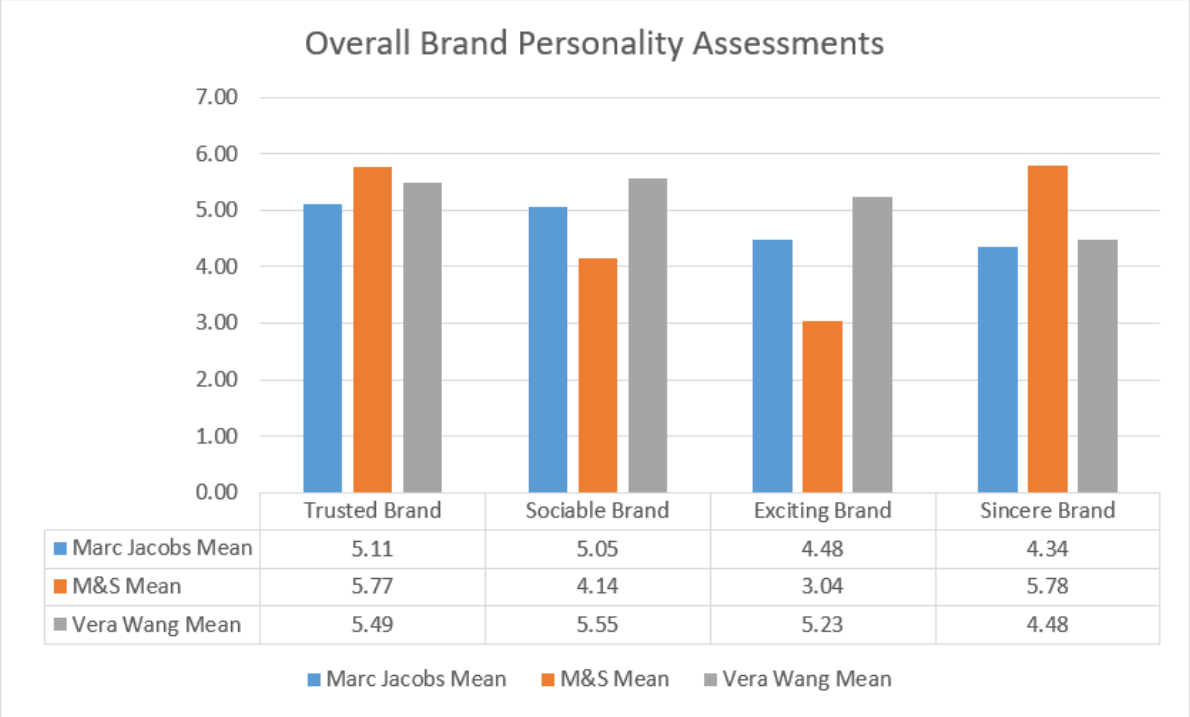
Respondents were asked to rate each of the fashion brands associated with the characters according to the brand personality characteristics identified by Mulyanegara et al. (2009). The results are shown in Figure 11.2 below.

**Figure 11.2** *Brand Personality Characteristics*



The scales for trusted, sociable and exciting brand personality dimensions were generally found to have acceptable to high levels of internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's alpha scores of 0.620 to 0.891. The scales for the sincere brand personality dimension had lower levels of internal consistency (a minimum of 0.572); however, the sincere brand scale only had two items and lower levels of Cronbach's alpha are frequently reported for scales with few items (Rammstedt & Beierlein, 2014). It was therefore determined that the internal consistencies of the brand personality scales were adequate to allow them to be collapsed into an average summated scale for each of the four brand personality dimensions so that these could be compared to the perceived character personalities.

**Figure 11.3** *Overall Brand Personality Assessments*




| | Trusted Brand | Sociable Brand | Exciting Brand | Sincere Brand |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marc Jacobs Mean | 5.11 | 5.05 | 4.48 | 4.34 |
| M&S Mean | 5.77 | 4.14 | 3.04 | 5.78 |
| Vera Wang Mean | 5.49 | 5.55 | 5.23 | 4.48 |

Both Marc Jacobs and Vera Wang are seen as trusted, sociable and exciting brands (although Vera Wang scores slightly higher than Marc Jacobs in all three categories. Both brands are seen as being significantly less sincere than Marks & Spencer.

Marks & Spencer is perceived as a trusted and sincere brand, scoring higher than both of the designer brands in these categories. In terms of the sociable brand dimension, whilst it is not seen as being particularly creative or outgoing, it is viewed as being a friendly brand (scoring higher than both Marc Jacobs and Vera Wang for this characteristic), but scores below the other two brands in all of the characteristics associated with excitement.

### 11.3.3 Relationship between brand personality and character personality

The brand personality constructs used in the questionnaire were developed by Mulyanegara et al. (2009) for a study undertaken in the context of fashion products. The table below shows how each of the dimensions of this brand personality scale are proposed to relate to the dimensions of the Big Five personality model.

**Table 11.4** *Relationship between Brand Personality and Big Five Personality Dimensions*

| Brand Personality | Corresponding Big Five Dimension(s) |
|---|---|
| Trusted Brand | Dependable |
| Sociable Brand | Emotionally Stable<br>Open to Experience<br>Agreeable |
| Exciting Brand | Extraverted |
| Sincere Brand | Agreeable |

Source: Mulyanegara et al. (2009)

At first glance, looking at the survey results, there would seem to be some evidence of a relationship between perceived character personalities and brand personalities. For example, Bridget is viewed as being the most dependable character and she is associated with Marks & Spencer, the most trustful brand. Similarly, Becky is viewed as being extraverted and open to experience, and she is associated with Vera Wang, the most exciting and sociable of the three brands. Angela is viewed as being emotionally stable and agreeable, and she is associated with Marc Jacobs which has a fairly high score as a sociable brand.

Mulyanegara et al. (2009) used regression analysis to test the relationship between consumer personality and brand personality. The dimensions of The Big Five inventory were used as the independent variables and the brand personality dimensions were used as dependent variables in a series of separate equations. Their aim was to test whether consumers who are dominant on a particular dimension of The Big Five prefer a brand personality that reflects that dimension, so this is an appropriate test. In the present study, it is not necessarily clear which variable is independent and which is dependent. As discussed in Chapter 5, character comprehension is a cyclical process; readers use cues in the text, such as brand names, to help them to construct and comprehend the character; but what they read in the text also adds to their social knowledge (e.g. this is the type of person which uses this brand). Therefore, rather than using regression analysis, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between perceived character personality and brand personality traits for each of the excerpts.

In the case of Angela and Marc Jacobs there was a statistically significant, moderate negative correlation between the character personality trait of agreeableness and the brand personality trait of exciting (*r = -0.312, p = 0.002)* and a small positive correlation between the character personality trait of open to experience and the brand personality trait of sincere (*r = 0.278, p = 0.007*).

In the case of Bridget and Marks & Spencer, there were statistically significant, small positive correlations between the character personality trait of agreeableness and the brand personality traits of trusted (*r = 0.208, p = 0.043)* and sincere (*r = 0.289, p = 0.005*).

In the case of Becky and Vera Wang, there was a statistically significant, small negative correlation between the character personality trait of extraverted and the brand personality trait of sincere (*r = -0.215, p = 0.040)* and a statistically significant, small positive correlation between the character trait of open to experience and the brand personality trait of exciting (*r = 0.211, p = 0.044)*.

**Table 11.5** *Pearson correlations for character: Angela and brand: Marc Jacobs*

| | Mark Jacobs - Trusted | Marc Jacobs - Sociable | Marc Jacobs - Exciting | Marc Jacobs - Sincere |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Angela: Extraverted | -.183 | -.121 | -.009 | .126 |
| Angela: Agreeable | .010 | -.022 | -.312** | .092 |
| Angela: Dependable | -.002 | -.061 | .012 | .067 |
| Angela: Emotionally stable | .003 | .022 | .127 | .107 |
| Angela: Open to experience | .080 | -.047 | -.102 | .278** |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

**Table 11.6** *Pearson correlations for character: Bridget and brand: Marks & Spencer*

| | Marks & Spencer - Trusted | Marks & Spencer - Sociable | Marks & Spencer - Exciting | Marks & Spencer - Sincere |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bridget: Extraverted | -0.040 | 0.139 | 0.142 | 0.007 |
| Bridget: Agreeable | 0.208* | 0.024 | -0.067 | 0.289** |
| Bridget: Dependable | 0.035 | 0.123 | -0.094 | 0.014 |
| Bridget: Emotionally stable | -0.005 | 0-.072 | -0.026 | -0.033 |
| Bridget: Open to experience | -0.120 | 0.004 | 0.005 | -0.197 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

**Table 11.7** *Pearson correlations for character: Becky and brand: Vera Wang*

| | Vera Wang - Trusted | Vera Wang - Sociable | Vera Wang - Exciting | Vera Wang - Sincere |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Becky: Extraverted | -0.054 | 0.037 | 0.049 | -0.215* |
| Becky: Agreeable | 0.041 | 0.123 | 0.002 | 0.005 |
| Becky: Dependable | 0.141 | 0.049 | 0.024 | 0.094 |
| Becky: Emotionally stable | 0.061 | -0.001 | 0.049 | 0.031 |
| Becky: Open to experience | 0.172 | 0.174 | 0.211* | 0.048 |

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The following table summarises the relationships found between perceptions of character personality and brand personality.

**Table 11.8** *Relationships between perceptions of character personality and brand personality*

| Character Personality | Negative Associations | Positive Associations |
|---|---|---|
| Extraverted | Sincere Brand | n/a |
| Agreeable | Exciting Brand | Trusted Brand<br>Sincere Brand |
| Dependable | n/a | n/a |
| Emotionally Stable | n/a | n/a |
| Open to Experience | n/a | Exciting Brand<br>Sincere Brand |

Whilst statistically significant correlations have been found between some elements of perceived character personality and brand personality, these associations are generally quite weak, and do not align with the suggested relationships between brand personality and Big Five dimensions originally proposed by Mulyanegara et al. (2009). They may therefore represent spurious associations. Thus, like much of the empirical research examining the relationship between consumer and brand personality (Aaker, 1999; Mulyanegara & Tsarenko, 2009) the findings in this area are inconclusive.

## 11.4 Product Placement Effectiveness

As discussed in Chapter 6, the effectiveness of product placements is often measured in terms of brand awareness (recall) and brand attitudes.

### 11.4.1 Unaided recall

After reading each excerpt and answering questions about character personality, respondents were asked to write down all of the brands that they could remember being mentioned in each excerpt. These brands were later coded in SPSS to produce frequency tables.

**Table 11.9** *Unaided Recall Frequencies*

| | | Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases |
| Unaided Recall - Angela's Story[a] | Marc Jacobs | 80 | 40.8% | 92.0% |
| | Harvey Nichols | 41 | 20.9% | 47.1% |
| | Next | 20 | 10.2% | 23.0% |
| | Bloomingdales | 40 | 20.4% | 46.0% |
| | Big Brown Bag | 7 | 3.6% | 8.0% |
| | False Positives | 8 | 4.1% | 9.2% |
| Total | | **196** | **100.0%** | **225.3%** |
| Unaided Recall - Bridget's Story[a] | Warehouse | 76 | 20.8% | 84.4% |
| | Nicole Farhi | 47 | 12.8% | 52.2% |
| | Whistles | 51 | 13.9% | 56.7% |
| | Joseph | 38 | 10.4% | 42.2% |
| | Miss Selfridge | 73 | 19.9% | 81.1% |
| | Marks & Spencer | 74 | 20.2% | 82.2% |
| | False Positive | 7 | 1.9% | 7.8% |
| Total | | **366** | **100.0%** | **406.7%** |
| Unaided Recall - Becky's Story[a] | Moschino | 69 | 20.5% | 75.8% |
| | Barney's | 51 | 15.1% | 56.0% |
| | Calvin Klein | 76 | 22.6% | 83.5% |
| | Vera Wang | 79 | 23.4% | 86.8% |
| | Marks & Spencer | 59 | 17.5% | 64.8% |
| | False Positive | 3 | 0.9% | 3.3% |
| Total | | **337** | **100.0%** | **370.3%** |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The resulting levels of unaided recall are generally very good. Those brands which were highly integrated with the plot (e.g. Marc Jacobs in Angela's story, Warehouse and Marks & Spencer in Bridget's Story and Vera Wang in Becky's story) tended to be most easily recalled, with over 80% of respondents correctly identifying each of these brands. This aligns with previous research where plot integration was found to have positive effects on brand recall and memory in product placement (Russell, 2002).

Those that achieved lower levels of recall, were often brands which would be less familiar to a young, British consumer (e.g. brands aimed at an affluent older demographic such as Nicole Farhi or Joseph or US department stores Bloomingdales and Barney's). Again, this is consistent with previous research in this area (Brennan & McCalman, 2011). The exception perhaps being Next, which is a very well-known British fashion store, but scored very poorly in this test, possibly because of a low level of plot

integration (it appears towards the end of the Angela excerpt as a descriptor of her old bag that she is discarding).

In each incidence there were some 'false positives' with respondents identifying brands that were not mentioned in the excerpt. These tended to be brands that were associated with the product categories mentioned in the story (e.g. some respondents identified Louis Vuitton as a brand mentioned in Angela's story, which took place in the bag department of an upmarket department store).

### 11.4.2 Prompted recall

In the prompted recall test respondents were presented with a list of 20 brands, 14 of which had been mentioned in the three excerpts and 6 of which had not. They were asked to indicate those that they remembered from the earlier stories.

In nearly every case, the prompted recall score was higher than the unprompted recall score, the only exception being Marc Jacobs where recall had dropped slightly from 92% of respondents in the unprompted test to 87.5% in the prompted recall test.

Once again, there were some false positives, with a small number of respondents mistakenly selecting some of the brands that had not appeared in any of the excerpts.

Previous research would suggest that recall increases with increased repetition of the brand name (Brennan & McCalman, 2011). Some of the brand names appeared more than once across the three excerpts and this is indicted on the frequency table.

Those brands that had appeared three times all exhibited high prompted recall scores, but some of the brands that appeared only once scored equally highly. Table 11.11 shows the mean recall scores for each group. Although the mean scores support the observation that recall improves with placement repetition, the small numbers of brands in the two and three repetition categories, and the high level of variability in the recall scores within the one repetition category, means that there is not enough statistical evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between prompted recall and placement repetition.

**Table 11.10** *Prompted Recall Frequencies*

| | | N | Percent | Percent of Cases | Number of mentions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Prompted Recall - All Stories[a] | | | | | |
| | Burberry | 4 | 0.4% | 4.2% | 0 |
| | Dolce & Gabbana | 4 | 0.4% | 4.2% | 0 |
| | Guess | 2 | 0.2% | 2.1% | 0 |
| | Karen Millen | 5 | 0.5% | 5.2% | 0 |
| | Levis | 0 | 0.0% | 0% | 0 |
| | Top Shop | 1 | 0.1% | 1.0% | 0 |
| | Barneys | 77 | 7.5% | 80.2% | 1 |
| | Bloomingdales | 61 | 5.9% | 63.5% | 1 |
| | Calvin Klein | 89 | 8.7% | 92.7% | 1 |
| | Joseph | 61 | 5.9% | 63.5% | 1 |
| | Harvey Nichols | 55 | 5.4% | 57.3% | 1 |
| | Marc Jacobs | 84 | 8.2% | 87.5% | 1 |
| | Miss Selfridge | 76 | 7.4% | 79.2% | 1 |
| | Moschino | 83 | 8.1% | 86.5% | 1 |
| | Next | 26 | 2.5% | 27.1% | 1 |
| | Whistles | 65 | 6.3% | 67.7% | 1 |
| | Nicole Farhi | 75 | 7.3% | 78.1% | 2 |
| | Marks & Spencer | 88 | 8.6% | 91.7% | 3 |
| | Warehouse | 83 | 8.1% | 86.5% | 3 |
| | Vera Wang | 89 | 8.7% | 92.7% | 3 |
| Total | | 1028 | 100.0% | 1070.8% | |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Table 11.11** *Prompted Recall by Number of Repetitions*

| | | Number of Repetitions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Prompted Recall | N=96 | | | | |
| | Number of brands in category | 6 | 10 | 1 | 3 |
| | Mean recall score (count) | 2.67 | 67.70 | 75.00 | 86.67 |
| | Standard deviation | 1.97 | 18.58 | n/a | 3.21 |

### 11.4.3 Brand attitudes

Product placement is believed to influence brand attitudes through the mere exposure effect, (Cowley & Barron, 2008; Ruggieri & Boca, 2013). This means that repeated exposure to a brand should result in an enhanced attitude towards it (Zajonc, 1968). The consumer does not need to recall the exposure to produce an effect on attitudes (Scott & White, 2016).

Respondents were asked to rate how much they liked or disliked each of the brands listed in the prompted recall question. Attitudes were measured using a 7-point scale ranging from strongly dislike to strongly like. The mid-point of the scale is 4.0. As the mean scores in the table below indicate, respondents generally held positive attitudes towards all of the brands listed, with the exception of Next which had a mildly negative attitude score of 3.74. It is interesting to note that levels of both prompted and unprompted recall for Next were both considerably lower than those for other brands mentioned in the three excerpts.

**Table 11.12** *Brand Attitudes*

| | Strongly Dislike Count | Dislike Count | Mildly Dislike Count | Undecided Count | Mildly Like Count | Like Count | Strongly Like Count | Mean | Number of Mentions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Burberry | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 36 | 30 | 16 | 5.43 | 0 |
| Dolce & Gabbana | 1 | 6 | 2 | 15 | 25 | 25 | 19 | 5.24 | 0 |
| Guess | 3 | 5 | 15 | 28 | 21 | 17 | 5 | 4.38 | 0 |
| Karen Millen | 2 | 6 | 17 | 28 | 18 | 14 | 9 | 4.40 | 0 |
| Levis | 0 | 0 | 5 | 11 | 17 | 34 | 27 | 5.71 | 0 |
| Top Shop | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 14 | 23 | 50 | 6.11 | 0 |
| Barneys | 1 | 1 | 2 | 71 | 6 | 12 | 1 | 4.28 | 1 |
| Bloomingdales | 1 | 1 | 3 | 52 | 12 | 22 | 2 | 4.58 | 1 |
| Calvin Klein | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 16 | 37 | 38 | 6.15 | 1 |
| Joseph | 2 | 1 | 6 | 59 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 4.36 | 1 |
| Harvey Nichols | 0 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 17 | 34 | 25 | 5.67 | 1 |
| Marc Jacobs | 1 | 2 | 6 | 13 | 18 | 34 | 20 | 5.41 | 1 |
| Miss Selfridge | 3 | 6 | 13 | 15 | 27 | 24 | 7 | 4.65 | 1 |
| Moschino | 4 | 7 | 5 | 17 | 24 | 25 | 12 | 4.84 | 1 |
| Next | 3 | 14 | 27 | 24 | 15 | 8 | 3 | 3.74 | 1 |
| Whistles | 2 | 2 | 8 | 32 | 12 | 20 | 19 | 4.96 | 1 |
| Nicole Farhi | 2 | 0 | 4 | 73 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 4.14 | 2 |
| Marks & Spencer | 1 | 11 | 22 | 10 | 31 | 16 | 4 | 4.29 | 3 |
| Warehouse | 6 | 4 | 13 | 22 | 23 | 18 | 8 | 4.47 | 3 |
| Vera Wang | 1 | 2 | 1 | 21 | 16 | 35 | 19 | 5.42 | 3 |

The most liked brands were Calvin Klein (mentioned once in a shopping-list context in Becky's story) and Top Shop (which wasn't mentioned in any of the excerpts), these brands had a mean attitude score of 6.15 and 6.11 respectively. The other brands with attitude scores over 5.0 were designer brands (Burberry, Dolce & Gabbana, Marc Jacobs and Vera Wang), plus high-end department store

Harvey Nichols and premium denim brand Levis. Given that four of the eight most-liked brands were not mentioned in any of the excerpts, it is probable that the respondents already had some well-established brand attitudes which were not significantly influenced by the brand mentions in the stories. In fact, overall, the mean attitude score for the non-placed brands was higher than that for the placed brands (non-placed: *M* = 5.177, *SD* = 0.786 versus placed: *M* =4.773, *SD* = 0.526).

This finding contradicts the idea that mere exposure automatically enhances attitudes towards brands but may be explained by the moderating effect of brand familiarity. The sample were all fashion marketing students and therefore could be reasonably expected to be familiar with the brands listed. Previous research in this area suggests that familiar brands are processed less extensively than unfamiliar brands when encountered in a fictional text, therefore readers will draw on their pre-existing attitudes when evaluating the brand and the narrative content will not have an impact on brand attitudes (Avramova et al., 2017b).

*11.4.3.1Influencing factors*

In the literature, several character-related factors have been proposed to influence consumers' attitudes towards placed brands. These factors include consumers' attitudes towards characters (Avramova et al., 2017b; Russell & Stern, 2006), self-character similarity (Avramova et al., 2017b; Bhatnagar & Wan, 2011) and the perceived fit between characters and brands (Avramova et al., 2017b).

Respondents were asked to rate their attitudes towards each character using a 7 point, 3 item scale. The scales for all three characters demonstrated good to high levels of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of >0.7. They were therefore collapsed into an average summated scale for each character (Attitude to [character]).

Self-character similarity was also measured using a 7 point, 3 item scale. The scales for all three characters demonstrated high levels of internal consistency, as determined by a Chronbach's alpha of >0.8. They were therefore collapsed into an average summated scale for each character (Similarity to [character]).

The perceived fit between characters and the brands associated with them in the text ([character] Brand Fit) was measured using a single item 7-point scale.

Table 11.13 summarises the data for each of these variables.

**Table 11.13** *Descriptive statistics for character-related factors*

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude to Angela | 96 | 1.33 | 7.00 | 4.8368 | 0.96850 |
| Attitude to Bridget | 96 | 1.00 | 6.67 | 4.0000 | 1.21876 |
| Attitude to Becky | 95 | 3.00 | 7.00 | 5.4105 | 0.99580 |
| Similarity to Angela | 96 | 1.00 | 7.00 | 4.2170 | 1.37290 |
| Similarity to Bridget | 96 | 1.00 | 7.00 | 3.7917 | 1.48146 |
| Similarity to Becky | 96 | 1.33 | 7.00 | 4.5677 | 1.46051 |
| Angela: Brand Fit | 96 | 1.00 | 7.00 | 4.0000 | 1.34600 |
| Bridget: Brand Fit | 96 | 1.00 | 7.00 | 4.0800 | 1.32700 |
| Becky: Brand Fit | 96 | 1.00 | 7.00 | 5.5300 | 1.19600 |

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the relationship between brand attitude and the three character-related factors. The brand receiving the highest unaided recall score for each story was identified: Marc Jacobs for Angela's story, Warehouse for Bridget's story and Vera Wang for Becky's story. Then attitude to this brand was used as the dependent variable with the three relevant character-related factors used as the independent variables in the regression.

**Table 11.14** *Multiple Regression Results for Attitude to Mark Jacobs*

| Attitude to Marc Jacobs | *B* | *95% CI for B* | | *SE B* | *ß* | $R^2$ | $R^2$ *(Adj)* | *F* | *Sig* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *LL* | *UL* | | | | | | |
| Model | | | | | | 0.039 | 0.007 | 1.233 | 0.303 |
| (Constant) | 5.889 | 4.308 | 7.469 | 0.796 | | | | | 0.000 |
| Attitude to Angela | -0.206 | -0.508 | 0.096 | 0.152 | -0.148 | | | | 0.179 |
| Similarity to Angela | -0.028 | -0.235 | 0.179 | 0.104 | -0.029 | | | | 0.789 |
| Angela: Brand Fit | 0.260 | -0.049 | 0.369 | 0.105 | 0.161 | | | | 0.132 |

**Table 11.15** *Multiple Regression Results for Attitude to Warehouse*

| Attitude to Warehouse | *B* | *95% CI for B* | | *SE B* | *ß* | $R^2$ | $R^2$ *(Adj)* | *F* | *Sig* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *LL* | *UL* | | | | | | |
| Model | | | | | | 0.032 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 0.397 |
| (Constant) | 3.836 | 2.498 | 5.174 | 0.673 | | | | | |
| Attitude to Bridget | 0.254 | -0.073 | 0.582 | 0.165 | 0.198 | | | | 0.126 |
| Similarity to Bridget | -0.013 | -0.271 | 0.244 | 0.130 | -0.013 | | | | 0.919 |
| Bridget: Brand Fit | -0.083 | -0.349 | 0.183 | 0.134 | -0.069 | | | | 0.536 |

**Table 11.16** *Multiple Regression Results for Attitude to Vera Wang*

| Attitude to Vera Wang | *B* | *95% CI for B* | | *SE B* | *ß* | $R^2$ | $R^2$ *(Adj)* | *F* | *Sig* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *LL* | *UL* | | | | | | |
| Model | | | | | | 0.095 | 0.065 | 3.151 | 0.029* |
| (Constant) | 3.066 | 1.483 | 4.649 | 0.797 | | | | | |
| Attitude to Becky | 0.197 | -0.050 | 0.408 | 0.115 | 0.168 | | | | 0.186 |
| Similarity to Becky | 0.069 | -0.096 | 0.490 | 0.148 | 0.154 | | | | 0.482 |
| Becky: Brand Fit | 0.179 | -0.125 | 0.263 | 0.098 | 0.080 | | | | 0.124 |

*p<0.05 Relationship is significant at the 0.05 level

*Note:* Model = "Enter" method in SPSS Statistics; *B* = unstandardised regression coefficient; *CI* = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; *SE B* = standard error of the coefficient; *ß* = standardised coefficient; $R^2$ = coefficient of determination; $R^2$ *(Adj)* = adjusted $R^2$

Only one of the three tests returned a statistically significant result. The multiple regression model for the variables relating to Becky's story statistically significantly predicted attitude to Vera Wang, *F* (3, 90) = 3.151, *p* =0.029, adj. $R^2$ = 0.065, however the adjusted $R^2$ is very low (only 6.5% of the variation in attitude is associated with variations in the three character factors) and none of the individual coefficients is significant.

Becky was the most-liked character, had the highest self-character similarity and was judged to have the best fit with the brands in her story. To check whether the model predicted attitudes towards other brands mentioned in Becky's story, two further regression analyses were conducted using attitudes to Calvin Klein and Moschino as the dependent variables, however neither generated a statistically significant result. Therefore, it does not appear that the three character-related factors had any influence on the brand attitudes reported in the survey.

## 11.5 Attitudes to Product Placement in Books

The final section of the questionnaire asked respondents about their attitudes towards product placement in fiction books. The items on the scale were based on those used by de Gregorio & Sung (2009) in an investigation of consumer attitudes toward brand names used in popular songs, which were in turn based on earlier studies of product placements in movies (Gupta et al., 2000; Gupta & Gould, 1997; Karrh et al., 2001). The items were adapted to make them relevant to fiction books as a placement medium; those items which were not relevant to fiction books were removed.

Table 11.17 compares the results of this study with Gupta & Gould's study of the acceptability of placements in movies and de Gregorio & Sung's study of product placement in songs.

**Table 11.17** *Attitudes to Product Placement in Different Media*

| Brand Placement Variables | Gupta et al (2000): Movies (N=1012) | de Gregorio and Sung (2009): Songs (N=437) | Present Study: Fiction Books (N=96) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Component 1: Ethics* | | | |
| It is unethical to influence readers by using brand names in fiction books. | 2.19 | 2.66 | 2.32 |
| I hate seeing brand name products in fiction books if they are placed for commercial purposes | 2.96 | 3.22 | 2.66 |
| I don't mind if authors receive money or other compensation from companies for placing their brands in a fiction book | 3.83 | 3.05 | 3.50 |
| Brands mentioned in a fiction book, for which the author receives payment from a company, should be disclosed at the beginning of the book. | 2.75 | 2.40 | 3.68 |
| *Component 2: Influence* | | | |
| I have bought brands because I have read about them in fiction books. | 1.77 | 2.24 | 2.03 |
| I am more likely to buy brands I am exposed to in a fiction book than those I see advertised. | Not measured | 2.11 | 2.02 |
| When I read fiction books, I pay attention to the brands they mention. | Not measured | 2.44 | 2.87 |
| Readers are subconsciously influenced by the brands they read about in fiction books. | 3.15 | 3.39 | 3.75 |
| I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books. | Not measured | 2.65 | 3.20 |
| *Component 3 - Realism* | | | |
| I prefer to see real brands mentioned in fiction books rather than made-up brands. | 4.13 | 3.36 | 3.91 |
| The presence of brand names in a fiction book makes it more realistic. | 4.09 | 3.01 | 4.09 |
| The brands mentioned in fiction books are true to what the character would use in real life. | Not measured | 2.98 | 3.91 |
| *Component 4 - Regulation* | | | |
| The government should regulate the use of brand names in fiction books. | 1.96 | 2.16 | 2.54 |
| The paid placement of brands in fiction books should be completely banned. | 1.48 | Not measured | 2.18 |
| I think that when brands are mentioned in fiction books, it is usually a form of paid advertising. | 3.46 | 3.11 | 3.08 |

Note: Mean scores are based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'.

In terms of ethics, respondents were more positive about the use of brand names in fiction books than in songs and appeared to be accepting of commercial product placements in fiction books, but they showed much stronger views about disclosure (*M* = 3.68) in comparison to movies (*M* = 2.75) and

songs (*M* = 2.40), when asked whether they agreed that 'brands mentioned in a fiction book, for which the author receives payment from a company, should be disclosed at the beginning of the book'.

In terms of influence, respondents suggested that brand placements in books did not greatly influence them personally in terms of purchase behaviour or attention (this is similar to the findings of the surveys dealing with placements in movies and songs); however, they thought that brand placements in books had a greater subconscious influence on readers in general (*M* = 3.75) than songs (*M*=3.39) or movies (*M*=3.15). They also indicated more general agreement with the statement 'I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books' (*M* = 3.20) than songs (*M*=2.65).

In terms of realism, respondents indicated that they preferred to see real brands rather than fictional brands in books (*M*=3.91), that the presence of real brands in books made the story more realistic (*M*=4.09) and that they felt that the brands used in fiction books were true to what the character would use in real life (*M*=3.91). These scores were all higher than those for songs, and of a similar level to those for movies.

Finally, in terms of regulation, respondents generally disagreed that the use of brand names in books should be regulated (*M*=2.54) or completely banned (*M*=2.18), but these scores indicated a greater tendency towards regulation than those reported for songs or movies. Respondents were less likely to think that brands mentioned in fiction books were a form of paid advertising (*M*=3.08) than when they appeared in songs (*M*=3.11) or movies (*M*=3.46).

## 11.6 Summary

This survey has confirmed previous research which suggests that brand placements in text are effective at generating high levels of brand recall and recognition (Brennan & McCalman, 2011). It would appear that both familiarity and repetition increase these effects, although this has not been proved statistically. No evidence has been found to indicate that brand placements have an influence on brand attitudes (although this may be due to the moderating effect of brand familiarity).

In terms of the relationship between characters and brands, there is limited evidence to suggest that readers' perceptions of character personality are related to their perceptions of the personalities of the brands mentioned in the narrative. Similarly, there is limited evidence to suggest that character-related factors (i.e. attitudes towards characters, self-character similarity, or perceptions of character-brand fit) have any influence on attitudes towards the brands with which they are associated in the text.

Previous research relating to audience opinions of the ethics and acceptability of product placement has focused on placements in movies, songs and TV. Despite evidence to suggest that novels are being

used as a product placement medium, no prior studies have investigated consumer attitudes towards product placements in fiction books. This study has addressed this gap, finding that respondents were generally positive towards paid brand placements in fiction books, but believe that these should be disclosed to the reader. Whilst they did not believe that their own purchase behaviour was significantly influenced by the presence of brands in novels, they did believe that brands mentioned in books had a greater subconscious influence on consumers than those in songs or movies and they indicated that, to some extent, they had learned about new brands by reading about them in fiction books. They were positive about the role that brands play in making fiction books more realistic, indicating a preference for the use of real brands over fictional brands in novels; and tended to be less likely to think that brand mentions in books were paid advertisements in comparison to movies or songs.

# Chapter 12: Discussion and Conclusions

## 12.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore the use of fashion brand names in women's popular fiction, concentrating on the relationships between fashion brands, authors, fictitious characters and readers. With this aim in mind, the study began by reviewing literature relating to branding, the use of brand names in novels, novelistic characterisation and product placement. This was followed by empirical research which investigated the frequency, variety and types of fashion brand names used in a corpus of chick lit novels. A qualitative analysis of the novels in the corpus was undertaken, focusing on the ways in which the characters interact with fashion brands in the text. In addition, a survey of chick lit authors was undertaken to investigate why writers use fashion brand names in their work; and a consumer survey was undertaken in order to understand readers' response to fashion brand names in novels.

This chapter reprises the objectives of the thesis and discusses the key findings of the study in relation to these research objectives. Following this, the theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed, while the final two sections of the chapter outline the study's limitations and propose directions for future research.

## 12.2 Restatement of Research Objectives

Fashion brand names are frequently used in many types of novels (Annesley, 1998; Arvidsson, 2006; S. Brown, 1996; Bullen, 2009; Dorney, 2004; N. R. Johnson, 2010) but, to date, there has been little academic research into this phenomenon and the effect that it has on the reader. Focusing specifically on chick lit (a type of contemporary popular fiction, typically featuring and aimed at young women) this study therefore set out to address this research gap.

The research objectives for the study were:

1. To investigate why authors use fashion brand names in novels.
2. To establish the extent to which fashion brand names are mentioned in selected novels.
3. To critically examine the relationship between character and fashion brands in selected novels.
4. To measure the impact of fashion brand placement in novels in terms of: (i) brand recall; and (ii) brand attitudes
5. To identify reader attitudes towards brand placement in novels

6. To extrapolate the potential commercial benefits of fashion brand product placement in novels.

The above objectives are used to structure the following discussion of the main findings of the thesis.

## 12.3 Discussion of the Main Findings

### 12.3.1 Why do chick lit authors use fashion brand names in their novels?

Whilst numerous commentators have speculated on the reasons why authors use brand names in novels (e.g. Arvidsson, 2006; Bloom, 2008; Hoeller, 1994; N. R. Johnson, 2010; Maginn, 1831) few have directly consulted authors for an answer to this question. This study is the first to use a large-scale survey of published novelists to investigate their reasons for including fashion brand names in their work and to explore the criteria that they use when selecting which brand names to employ.

The author survey found that chick lit authors primarily used fashion brand names in their novels to support characterisation, choosing brands which they felt had a natural fit with the character. This aligns with the observations of previous commentators (e.g. Amis, 1965; Bloom, 2008; Hoeller, 1994; Mullan, 2006) who suggest that brand names are used in novels to help support characterisation, either by foregrounding products as an indication of lifestyle (Bloom, 2008) or by demonstrating the character's focus on their outward appearance and self-construction, using brands to 'speak' for them in communicating their preoccupation with themselves and their social status (Arvidsson, 2005; Hoeller, 1994). Clothing, in particular, is a highly symbolic and value-expressive product category (Auty & Elliott, 2005; Kim et al., 2010) and therefore clothing brands are useful in communicating the personality and values of characters. Previous studies of chick lit suggest that fashion brands are used as a code for lifestyle (Dorney, 2004); that the use of designer brands helps characters to project an image of luxury and status to others (Van Slooten, 2006) and that they emphasise the characters' cultural capital (P. Butler & Desai, 2008). Thus, there seems to be an implicit understanding in the literature that fashion brand names in novels are linked to characterisation, but this understanding is based on anecdotal evidence or qualitative analyses of narratives. The present study appears to be the first to survey authors to confirm that they use fashion brand names to support characterisation.

In addition, the author survey indicated that chick lit authors use fashion brand names in their novels to add realism. Again, this supports the literature which suggests that brand names are used to inject verisimilitude into fictional works (e.g. Amis, 1965; de Botton, 1996; Hoeller, 1994) and accords with the findings of the consumer survey where respondents agreed that the presence of brand names in a fiction book makes it more realistic and that the brands mentioned in fiction books were true to what the character would use in real life. This is consistent with Hoeller's suggestion that brand names

make characters appear more realistic, enabling the reader to more closely identify and sympathise with them (Hoeller, 1994).

The other key reason that authors gave for using fashion brand names in their work was to help the reader to visualise a character or scene more easily. In order to accomplish this, they preferred to use well-known brand names with a distinctive 'look'. Some authors rely heavily on description to create characters (Archer & Jockers, 2016) and the qualitative analysis of the chick lit corpus provided many examples of visual imagery using fashion brand names alongside detailed descriptions of clothing. The social media quotes used in the introduction of the thesis illustrate how important this aspect of chick lit can be for some readers, for example:

> *"…I always find myself on Pinterest looking up Angela's outfits so I can picture her more clearly and thanks to the detailed descriptions of her shopping it's easy to do that."*

Thus, the use of brand names can help the reader to more easily identify, and therefore visualise, what the character is wearing.

### 12.3.2 The extent of fashion brand name use in the chick lit corpus

The summative content analysis of the chick lit corpus indicated that the selected novels exhibited relatively high levels of brand name usage in terms of both brand name frequency and brand name variety. On average 32.27 brands were mentioned per 10,000 words of text in the chick lit corpus. Within this a total of 1,278 discrete brand name varieties were found across the 19 books in the corpus (this equates to 7.09 discrete brand name varieties per 10,000 words of text). Comparison with previous research suggests that these levels are similar to those of some other genres of contemporary popular fiction, such as the sex and shopping genre (S. Brown, 1995a, 1996; Friedman, 1991), and considerably lower than the levels found in *American Psycho* (S. Brown, 1995b). The extent of brand name use varies both between the different chick lit series in the corpus and between individual novels within a series, depending on the style of the author and the nature of the story.

Conspicuous consumption of branded fashion items has been identified as a key feature of chick lit (Dorney, 2004; Patterson & Brown, 1999; Van Slooten, 2006) and this is reflected in the findings of the summative content analysis. 20.8% of the brands mentioned in the chick lit corpus were related to wearing apparel, a further 8.9% were related to fashion retail and department stores, 2.6% related to beauty, fragrance and hair products and 1.5% related to jewellery, watches and eyewear. Therefore, 33.8% of all of the brand names mentioned in the selected novels could be considered to be fashion related. In terms of product category, this is a very different profile to that found in Friedman's study of American post-war bestsellers. Automotive brands (the largest category in Friedman's study at

24.7%) are barely mentioned in chick lit, whilst fashion brands and retail stores are mentioned much more frequently. The chick lit profile is much closer to that found in Brown's study of the sex and shopping genre (S. Brown, 1995a), and fits with the traditional, stereotypical pre-occupations of women's fiction, i.e. clothes and shopping (S. Brown, 1995b; Woolf, 1929). The qualitative analysis of the chick lit corpus found that literary techniques such as listing of fashion brands, personification of fashion items and the use of fashion brands in metaphors, helped to emphasise the importance of fashion brands and products in chick lit narratives.

However, it should be noted that there were some distinct differences in the product category profiles of the three chick lit series in the corpus. Whilst the *Shopaholic* and *I Heart* series had similarly high levels of brand usage relating to wearing apparel (26.3% and 23.6% respectively), this proportion was much lower in the *Bridget Jones* series, where apparel brands accounted for only 10.9% of the brand names mentioned (although this is still significantly higher than Friedman's corpus, where wearing apparel brands accounted for just 5.0% of all brand names mentioned (Friedman, 1991)). The types of brand names mentioned in the three series were also different, with the *Shopaholic* and *I Heart* series using more luxury and designer brands, whilst the *Bridget Jones* series used more high street brands. Despite being acknowledged as the prototype for the chick lit genre, previous studies have suggested that *Bridget Jones's Diary* is atypical amongst chick lit novels (Gormley, 2009; Montoro, 2012), positioning itself somewhere between literary and popular fiction, whereas later chick lit novels are positioned as light entertainment (Gormley, 2009); this difference in positioning may account for the different patterns of fashion brand usage in the *Bridget Jones* series, with its emphasis on social observation rather than escapism and romantic comedy. Nevertheless, the apparent prominence of fashion brands in the chick lit corpus contradicts Montoro's assertion that "*Chick Lit chicks do not talk so much about clothes, beauty products or shoes as they are deemed to do*" (Montoro, 2012, p. 97).

Friedman suggested that the two largest categories of brands in his study (automobiles and magazines) were used by novelists to facilitate symbolic communication, supporting characterisation due to their ability to express the values, self-concepts and stereotypes of their typical brand users (Friedman, 1991). Given that fashion brands are also value-expressive and are mentioned much more frequently than automobiles in chick lit, it would seem likely that chick lit authors use fashion brands in the same way. This conclusion is supported by the findings of the author survey, which confirm that chick lit writers primarily use fashion brand names to support characterisation and choose those brands which they feel are congruent with the character.

### 12.3.3 The relationship between characters and fashion brands in chick lit

A qualitative analysis of the relationship between characters and fashion brands in the chick lit corpus identified a number of common themes.

Throughout the corpus, fashion brands were used by chick lit characters to deliberately construct and re-construct their identity. Characters viewed fashion choices and brands as something which had the ability to define them as a person. All of the protagonists carefully planned outfits to communicate specific messages about themselves, drawing on the symbolic power of fashion brands to say something about them or their intentions. This use of fashion brands in conscious self-construction by characters is a feature of many contemporary fiction novels (Arvidsson, 2006; Hoeller, 1994; Patterson & Brown, 1999), and preoccupations with identity, self-image and consumerism have been identified as key characteristics of chick lit protagonists (Wherry, 2015); therefore the findings are consistent with the literature in this area.

In all three series, there was a recognition that fashion is expensive. Chick lit characters often got into debt to pay for their fashion, tried to justify expensive fashion purchases as investments and experienced buyer's remorse. Highlighting the cost of building and maintaining a fashionable wardrobe has been identified as a popular plotline in chick lit (Harzewski, 2006; Scanlon, 2013), allowing readers to live out their hedonistic consumerist fantasies through the consumption of the characters (Van Slooten, 2006; C. A. Wilson, 2012b). The qualitative analysis of the corpus identified some of the ways that chick lit characters tried to mitigate the cost of their fashion consumption by bargain hunting, borrowing and sharing and this may make the fashion consumption focused plotlines a little more realistic for readers.

Fashion brands were generally written about in positive terms in the novels. The protagonists frequently spoke about branded fashion items in terms of love and desire, and both shopping for fashion and fashion products themselves were identified as sources of excitement and pleasure on a par with, or exceeding, the excitement and pleasure derived from sex or romance. This observation is supported by some of the academic literature relating to chick lit, which suggests that fashion, commodities and shopping are foregrounded in chick lit, whilst the romance plot and the romantic hero are often relegated to a background role (Harzewski, 2006; C. A. Wilson, 2012b), however this conclusion should be treated with caution. Although it is easy to point to qualitative evidence that suggests that chick lit protagonists favour fashion consumption over romance, an examination of the word frequencies in the corpus suggests otherwise. In each of the series studied, the romantic hero's name features in the top four words used across the series. This suggests that the romantic hero, and thus the romance plot, is a lot more important than previously suggested in chick lit. Whilst the

frequent use of fashion brand names and descriptions of fashion consumption experiences help to differentiate chick lit novels from traditional romances, the romance plot and relationship with the romantic hero is still at the core of the chick lit narrative.

Finally, chick lit characters were focused on appearance. They used fashion to make themselves look good and feel confident, but occasionally had insecurities about their size, weight or age. It has been suggested that the protagonist's perceived flaws and lack of satisfaction with their appearance make the characters seem more realistic to readers, helping them to identify with the characters and eliciting their compassion (Ferriss & Young, 2006a; Wells, 2006), so this observation is consistent with the literature.

#### *12.3.3.1 The relationship between character personality and fashion brand personality*

The author survey found that chick lit authors use fashion brands which they believe have a natural congruency with the character and those that have their own distinct personality. Marketing theory suggests that people choose and use brands which reflect their personality and self-image (Dolich, 1969; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Phau & Lau, 2001; Sirgy, 1982). It was therefore hypothesised that where authors use fashion brand names in a novel, they have similarly selected brands which reflect the personality and image of the character that they are creating.

Very little was found in the literature relating to the question of how and why authors select the specific brand names that they use in their novels. This study addressed this gap by surveying a sample of chick lit authors and asking them about the criteria that they use when choosing a fashion brand name to include in their work. The survey found that chick lit authors use fashion brands which they believe have a natural congruency with the character, those brands that have their own distinct personality, those with a distinctive look, and those which are already well-known to readers. These findings lend support to the assumption that authors select brands whose brand personalities and user-images are congruent with the character's personality and image, and that they expect readers to use their familiarity with the brands to help decode the author's construction of the character.

The summative content analysis included an analysis of the association of fashion brand names with the main characters in the three chick lit series in the corpus. This analysis found that the characters of the protagonists were significantly more developed in terms of brand associations than other character roles in the novels. Other female characters in the novels were supported to some extent by fashion-brand referencing, particularly the protagonist's friends. There was little use of fashion-related brands to support male characterisation.

An initial examination of the fashion brands most frequently associated with each protagonist indicated some degree of fit between the brands and the characters. So, for example, Becky Bloomwood (a fashion-obsessed shopaholic who marries a millionaire) was most frequently associated with Barneys (an upscale New York department store selling high-fashion luxury and designer brands) and Prada (a luxury brand which claims to be synonymous with avant-garde style).

Montoro (2007) argues that characters in chick lit lack distinctiveness. Because of this supposed similarity of chick lit protagonists, it has been suggested that textual cues (such as descriptions of clothing or the use of brand names) do not contribute to the readers' impression of the character, and instead the reader relies on their existing media knowledge of the stereotypical chick lit character-type in order to understand and make sense of the character in the novel (Dorney, 2004; Montoro, 2012). However, a qualitative content analysis of the novels in the corpus found that the three chick lit protagonists in this study, whilst all matching the typical chick lit protagonist profile, were quite different in terms of their relationship with fashion brands; ranging from the budget-conscious Bridget Jones who favoured high street brands and lacked confidence in her fashion choices, through to Becky Bloomwood, a fashion 'expert' who was happy to go into debt to buy the designer brands that she craved. Similarly, the consumer survey found that respondents assessed the personalities of the three protagonists differently based on short excerpts from the novels which included descriptions of fashion shopping trips. Becky was considered to be very extraverted and open to experience, agreeable and relatively emotionally stable. Angela had a similar personality assessment, although she was considered to be less extraverted than Becky. Whilst Bridget scored considerably lower than the other two characters on all of the big five personality dimensions, other than dependability. Together, these findings suggest: (a) that fashion consumption, or the character's relationship with fashion and fashion brands, is one of the elements that helps to differentiate between chick lit characters; and (b) that readers perceive characters as being different and distinctive based on textual cues associated with characters in the text, including those relating to fashion consumption. This study therefore casts doubt on the assertions that reader comprehension of character in chick lit is based on top-down processes based on character-types rather than bottom-up processes using textual cues (Dorney, 2004; Montoro, 2012).

Given that chick lit authors said that they used fashion brands to support characterisation and chose brands which were congruent with the character and had a distinct personality, it was theorised that readers' assessments of characters' personalities would be consistent with their assessments of the personalities of the brands associated with the characters in the novels. This was tested in the consumer survey using the FIPI Big Five personality inventory (Gosling et al., 2003) in conjunction with a set of brand personality scales, which had been developed and tested in a young fashion context

(Mulyanegara et al., 2009). Although statistically significant correlations were found between some elements of perceived character personality and brand personality, these associations were generally quite weak, and did not align with the suggested relationships between brand personality and Big Five dimensions originally proposed by Mulyanegara et al. (2009). Thus, the findings were inconclusive, and contrary to expectations, the study was unable to demonstrate a clear relationship between perceived character personality and brand personality. Whilst disappointing, an inconclusive result is not unusual in empirical research examining the relationship between consumer and brand personality (Aaker, 1999; Mulyanegara & Tsarenko, 2009). It has been suggested that one reason for this is that human personality and brand personality are different constructs, with different sets of traits which do not always correspond with one another (Aaker, 1997; Mulyanegara & Tsarenko, 2009), therefore demonstrating a correlation between the two constructs can be problematic.

### 12.3.4 The impact of fashion brand placement in novels on the reader

Based on data gathered from comments on social media, in the introduction to this thesis it was theorised that the use of fashion brand names in novels may have an impact on readers' behaviour as consumers. This is a theme that is echoed in the literature (e.g. Bullen, 2009; Cooper et al., 2010; Friedman, 1987, 1991; N. R. Johnson, 2010).

Several studies have investigated the impact of brand names in text on readers. The results of these studies suggest that brand placement in text has an impact on brand recall (Brennan, 2008; Brennan & McCalman, 2011), recognition (Brennan & McCalman, 2011), memory (Manzano, 2010), attitude (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b), preference (Manzano, 2010), choice (Brennan & McCalman, 2011) and purchase intention (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b; Storm & Stoller, 2014). These affects are moderated by a number of factors, including: placement modality (Avramova et al., 2017a; Brennan, 2008), repetition (Avramova et al., 2017b; Brennan & McCalman, 2011; Storm & Stoller, 2014), plot integration (Olsen & Lanseng, 2012), brand familiarity (Avramova et al., 2017b; Brennan & McCalman, 2011; Storm & Stoller, 2014) and reader involvement/transportation (Avramova et al., 2017b; Olsen & Lanseng, 2012).

These previous studies used a variety of texts as a medium, including short stories (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b), text books (Brennan & McCalman, 2011), excerpts from novels (Brennan, 2008; Olsen & Lanseng, 2012) and narratives produced specifically for the purpose of the study (Manzano, 2010; Storm & Stoller, 2014). In each case, a quasi-experimental methodology was used, manipulating various aspects of the text and using split groups of respondents to make comparisons between reader responses to different conditions. This study has taken a different approach, using a survey

methodology to investigate reader response to a series of excerpts from chick lit novels without any manipulation of the text, so that brand names appear in the form originally intended by the author.

Brand awareness and brand attitude are considered to be the two universal marketing communications objectives (Rossiter et al., 2018), therefore the impact of the use of fashion brand names in novels was investigated with reference to these two constructs.

#### *12.3.4.1 Impact on brand recall*

Survey respondents' unaided recall of the brands mentioned in the excerpts was very good. Those brands which were highly integrated with the plot appeared to be most easily recalled, with over 80% of respondents correctly identifying each of these brands. This aligns with previous research where plot integration was found to have positive effects on brand recall and memory in product placement (Russell, 2002). Those that achieved lower levels of recall tended to be brands which would be less familiar to the respondents. Again, this is consistent with previous research in this area (Brennan & McCalman, 2011).

Similarly, respondents' ability to recognise the brands mentioned in the excerpts when prompted was very good, with prompted recall rates higher than unprompted recall rates in most cases. Those brands which were repeated more than once in the excerpts appeared to demonstrate the highest levels of prompted recall, however there was not enough statistical evidence to confirm this relationship. Nevertheless, the results appear to reflect those of Brennan & McCalman (2011) in so much as placement repetition appeared to increase recognition.

#### *12.3.4.2 Impact on brand attitude*

Product placement is believed to influence brand attitudes through the mere exposure effect, (Cowley & Barron, 2008; Ruggieri & Boca, 2013). Therefore, it was theorised that survey respondents would report enhanced attitudes to those fashion brands which were mentioned in the excerpts in comparison to brands that were not mentioned. This hypothesis was supported by previous studies which found that the use of brand names in text resulted in enhanced brand attitudes (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b).

However, the mean attitude score for the brands placed in the excerpts was actually lower than that for the non-placed brands. It would therefore appear that the respondents already had some well-established brand attitudes which were not significantly influenced by the appearance of brand names in the excerpts. This finding contradicts the idea that mere exposure automatically enhances attitudes towards brands.

Similarly, the literature suggests that several character-related factors moderate consumers' attitudes towards placed brands. These factors include consumers' attitudes towards characters (Avramova et al., 2017b; Russell & Stern, 2006), self-character similarity (Avramova et al., 2017b; Bhatnagar & Wan, 2011) and the perceived fit between characters and brands (Avramova et al., 2017b). The relationship between brand attitude and these three character-related factors was tested using a series of multiple regression analyses, but no evidence was found to suggest that the character-related factors had any significant influence on the brand attitudes reported in the survey.

These unexpected results might be explained by the moderating effect of brand familiarity. The sample were all fashion marketing students and therefore could be reasonably expected to be familiar with the brands listed. Previous research in this area suggests that familiar brands are processed less extensively than unfamiliar brands when encountered in a fictional text, therefore readers will draw on their pre-existing attitudes when evaluating the brand and the narrative content will not have an impact on brand attitudes (Avramova et al., 2017b). Although the moderating effect of brand familiarity was known before selecting the survey sample, a decision was made to use respondents with a good level of fashion brand knowledge, (a) so that they were more able to answer the questions about brand personality; and (b) to minimise the effects of differential levels of brand familiarity on the results. Previous quasi-experimental studies have avoided this issue by manipulating the text to include both real and fictional (or obscure) brands.

#### *12.3.4.3 Consumer perceptions of the impact of brand names in novels*

The consumer survey asked respondents a series of direct questions about the degree to which they believed that product placement in novels might influence readers. These questions were based on studies undertaken in relation to consumer attitudes towards product placements in movies (Gupta et al., 2000) and popular songs (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009).

Respondents indicated that they believed that brand placements in books did not greatly influence them personally in terms of purchase behaviour or attention (this is similar to the findings of the surveys dealing with placements in movies and songs); however, they thought that brand placements in books had a greater subconscious influence on readers in general (*M* = 3.75) than songs (*M*=3.39) or movies (*M*=3.15). They also indicated more general agreement with the statement 'I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books' (*M* = 3.20) than songs (*M*=2.65). These results suggest that consumers recognise that brand names in novels may have a subconscious influence on readers, but they do not like to think of themselves as being personally susceptible to such influences. They also suggest that fiction books may be a good way to introduce new brands to consumers. This

conclusion is consistent with that of Olsen & Lanseng (2012) who suggested that novels may be useful contexts to create awareness for new brands and demonstrate a brand's usage areas.

### 12.3.5 Reader attitudes towards brand placement in novels

Previous academic research relating to audience opinions of the ethics and acceptability of product placement has focused on placements in movies (Gupta et al., 2000; Gupta & Gould, 1997), songs (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009) and TV (Tiwsakul & Hackley, 2005). Despite evidence to suggest that novels are being used as a commercial product placement medium (e.g. Lehu, 2007; R. A. Nelson, 2004; Ślósarz, 2018), no prior studies have investigated consumer attitudes towards product placement in fiction books. This study has addressed this gap.

Respondents to the consumer survey were broadly positive about the use of brand names in fiction books and appeared to be accepting of commercial product placement in novels, reporting similar attitudes to those found in previous studies relating to product placements in movies (Gupta et al., 2000) and songs (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009).

This finding is surprising, because it has been suggested that paid-for product placement in novels often generates concern or controversy (Lehu, 2007; R. A. Nelson, 2004; Ślósarz, 2018). Some of this concern stems from the fact that product placement is a form of covert marketing (Karniouchina et al., 2011) and, given that brand names are frequently used in novels for literary purposes (such as characterisation or verisimilitude), commentators are worried that readers would be unable to distinguish between those brand names that are being used to support the narrative and those that are there for commercial purposes. The literature review adds support to this concern as several academic researchers appeared to be unable to distinguish between paid and unpaid product placement in novels (e.g. S. Brown, 1996; Dorney, 2004; Ślósarz, 2018). Therefore, without disclosure of a commercial arrangement, it is unlikely that readers would be able to distinguish between the paid and unpaid use of brand names.

The consumer survey findings reinforce this view. Respondents were less likely to think that brand mentions in books were paid advertisements in comparison to those in movies or songs, and they demonstrated much stronger views about disclosure of paid-for product placements in novels in comparison to movies and songs. Thus, whilst they are broadly positive about paid product placement in novels, they don't assume that all brand mentions in novels are paid placements, and therefore believe that it is important that they are made aware when paid product placement takes place.

There is currently no legal requirement in the UK, EU or US for authors, publishers or brand owners to disclose paid placements to readers, however previous research suggests that disclosures of paid

product placements in novels has little impact on the effectiveness of the placement (Storm & Stoller, 2014), and where previous commercial product placements in novels have been disclosed (e.g. *The Bulgari Connection* or *The Sweetest Taboo*), the resulting media attention has generally been beneficial for the author (Hakim, 2004).

### 12.3.6 The potential commercial benefits of fashion brand placement in novels

Despite the widespread use of brand names in chick lit novels, none of the author survey respondents had ever been paid to use a specific brand name (fashion or otherwise) in their work. Therefore, it can be concluded that commercial product placement does not currently appear to be used to any significant extent in this medium. This accords with previous observations which suggest that paid product placements in novels are actually quite rare (Grady, 2019; Lehu, 2007).

Novels have been identified as having a number of positive characteristics as a product placement medium: placements can be precisely targeted in different genres of fiction; brand names can be repeated several times throughout the work and readers can pause over the brand names when and how they please (Lehu, 2007); through the use of persuasive narrative, they can promote consumer desire (Bullen, 2009); and because of the solitary nature of reading, consumers are less likely to get distracted and miss the brand names in the narrative (Mucundorfeanu & Szambolics, 2017). This study has demonstrated good levels of recall and recognition for brand names placed in text and, in addition, previous research has found that brand placements in text also have a positive impact on memory (Manzano, 2010), attitude (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b), preference (Manzano, 2010), choice (Brennan & McCalman, 2011) and purchase intention (Avramova et al., 2017a, 2017b; Storm & Stoller, 2014). Therefore, it is perhaps surprising that more use has not been made of novels as a product placement medium.

It has been suggested that the reason that there are few paid placements in novels may be due to authors' lack of business acumen rather than a lack of interest from brands (Lehu, 2007). A few respondents to the author survey indicated an interest in incorporating paid placements in their work. Some had proactively sought sponsorship from brands mentioned in their novels (e.g. wine companies to sponsor book launches) with varying degrees of success, but for the most part commercial product placement did not seem to be anything that the respondents had previously considered, therefore Lehu may be correct in his observation. Some of the authors responding to the survey reported that they had received free products in return for using specific brand names in their novels, and a few others reported receiving gifts from brands (including fashion brands) that they had mentioned in their books following publication. This suggests that there is a little interest amongst brand owners, but that they are not proactively seeking to incorporate their brand names into chick lit novels.

The publishing industry is currently undergoing a great deal of change. Online retailing, ebooks, subscription services and self-publishing are changing the nature of the book market for both publishers and authors. Both parties are looking for alternative sources of revenue, and it has been suggested that product placement in novels may represent a significant marketing opportunity for them (Avramova et al., 2017b).

Some authors have taken advantage of developments in the publishing industry to develop interactive chick lit novels incorporating product placements, notably Riley Costello's *Waiting at Hayden's* (2018). Costello's *Shopfiction*™ platform is based on affiliate links – a model which is well established and very successful in fashion blogging and social media. Although *Waiting at Hayden's* appears to have been well received by readers, with several Amazon reviewers commenting positively on the ability to watch linked videos and buy the clothes featured in the book, the *Shopfiction*™ concept does not appear to have gained any wider interest amongst authors or publishers.

Grady (2019) has argued that the reach of a typical novel is so limited that the use of novels as a product placement medium would not represent a viable commercial proposition for brands, however chick lit is a form of popular fiction and its sales tend to be higher than those for more literary outputs (Gormley, 2009), making commercial product placement potentially more viable. It is also a genre where readers expect to see the use of fashion brand names, therefore it would be easy to incorporate paid-for placements of fashion brands without compromising the narrative. The results of the consumer survey suggest that readers are broadly positive about commercial product placement in novels, providing that such placements are disclosed, and the findings of the author survey suggested that there was no significant resistance to product placement from chick lit authors.

This study has confirmed that brand placement in novels is effective in promoting brand recall and recognition. The survey respondents also indicated general agreement with the statement "I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books". Together these findings would support the conclusions of Olsen & Lanseng (2012) who argued that the portrayal of new brands in popular fiction could increase brand awareness and that novels could be used to demonstrate a brand's usage areas. However, the respondents to the author survey indicated a preference for using well-known brands rather than niche brands or those new to the market, which suggests that they may be reluctant to consider paid placement of new or less well-known fashion brands in their work. Nevertheless, the summative content analysis found that there were a number of relatively niche fashion brands used in the novels of the corpus (e.g. James Perse, Rebecca Taylor, Tracy Connop). Often these brands were used in conjunction with other, similar, brands, e.g.

> *"I already had an olive green Roberto Rodriguez number, a yellow Phillip Lim 3.1 shift, black Kerrigan silk dress and half a dozen T-shirt dresses from Ella Moss, Splendid and James Perse hanging from the wall.."* (Kelk, 2010a, p. 32)

When used in this way, if the reader is familiar with at least one of the other brands they will get a sense of the positioning of the unfamiliar brand relative to more familiar brands, so this could be a method of introducing new brands to readers.

Similarly, Olsen & Lanseng (2012) suggested that the association of brands with fictitious literary characters could help in brand positioning. The author survey indicated that chick lit authors used brands that they believed had a natural congruency with the character and the consumer survey suggested that readers believed that the brands mentioned in fiction books were true to what the character would use in real life. Positioning on user imagery has been proven to be an effective product positioning strategy (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010), therefore associating a fashion brand with an appropriate chick lit protagonist could assist in brand positioning.

### 12.3.7 Relationship with Friedman's work

Throughout this thesis, reference has been made to the work of Monroe Friedman, and in particular, his study of the use of brand names in popular American novels of the post-war era (Friedman, 1985, 1991). In common with subsequent studies by Stephen Brown (S. Brown, 1995a, 1995b) the present study used Friedman's summative content analysis methodology, product classifications and standardised measures of brand name frequency and brand name variety, allowing comparisons to be made with both sets of previous work.

Although it uses a similar methodology, the present study is significantly different to Friedman's original work. Friedman's aim was to determine the extent to which language in America had been influenced by advertising and other commercial language in the post-war era. Friedman used best-selling novels as a surrogate for a longitudinal sample of contemporary American language, arguing that the novels' popularity with the American public suggested that the language used in them was representative of that in the times in which they were published. Friedman followed up his analysis of the brands used in novels with a survey of undergraduate students. Consistent with the aims of his study, his survey focused on the respondents' familiarity with the frequently mentioned brands, and their use of these brand names in their conversations with friends and family, rather than their use within novels (Friedman, 1991). Thus, Friedman was interested in the use of brand names in contemporary language, rather than their use in novels *per se*.

Friedman's criteria for selecting the sample of novels in his study were that each novel had to be an American best seller, they should be set in contemporary America (no historical novels were included),

they should be set in mainstream American life (thus novels set in institutional environments such as mental hospitals or army bases were excluded), and they should be the first novel published by their respective authors (to exclude works which had become formulaic in character and thus might not reflect recent cultural changes). His final sample consisted of 31 contemporary American best sellers published between 1946 and 1974, written by 31 different authors and covering a range of popular literary genres (Friedman, 1991).

The present study is slightly smaller than Friedman's, analysing 19 novels in comparison to Friedman's 31, but it represents the largest longitudinal study of brand name usage in novels since Friedman's original work, covering a 22-year period from 1996 to 2017. It has a narrower focus than Friedman's, as it provides an in-depth study of the work of just three authors (Helen Fielding, Sophie Kinsella and Lindsey Kelk) working within a single genre (women's popular fiction, or chick lit). The findings demonstrate a significantly different distribution of brand names by product class in the chick lit corpus than in Friedman's more general study, suggesting that the pattern of branded products and services used by characters in novels may be author and/or genre specific. This finding is consistent with Brown's analysis of brand names used in individual sex and shopping and blank fiction novels, which also produced different distributions of brands by product class compared to Friedman's general corpus (S. Brown, 1995a, 1995b).

Chick lit has been characterised as a genre which makes heavy use of fashion brand names (P. Butler & Desai, 2008; Dorney, 2004; Van Slooten, 2006; F. Wood & Stone, 2011). The present study has confirmed this observation, finding that wearing apparel brands were the most commonly used category of brands within the chick lit corpus (20.8% of all brand mentions in comparison to just 5.0% of the brand names mentioned in Friedman's corpus). As the present study specifically focused on the use of fashion brand names in chick lit novels, additional product sub-categories were added to Friedman's original coding scheme in order to examine the use of fashion brand names in more detail, this additional level of analysis demonstrated that within wearing apparel, brand names associated with footwear, dresses and bags, were the most frequently used.

The adoption of an abductive approach and mixed methods methodology, meant that this study incorporated a number of elements that were absent from Friedman's research, including quantitative and qualitative examinations of the association of fashion brand names with specific characters and surveys of authors and consumers. These additional elements enhance the interpretability and validity of the findings though the elaboration, illustration and clarification of the results from one method with the results from another.

Friedman hypothesised that the most frequently mentioned brands in his corpus (automobile and magazine brands) were used by novelists because they were associated with products which had the potential for symbolic communication, expressing users' values and self-concepts and invoking user stereotypes (Friedman, 1991). The present study significantly advances this element of Friedman's work, providing a multi-dimensional examination of the use of fashion brand names to support characterisation within novels. This included an analysis of the association of fashion brands with specific characters in both the summative and qualitative content analyses. The results demonstrated that a constellation of fashion brands combined to support the more complex characterisation of the novels' protagonists, who often used fashion brands in conscious self-construction, whilst a more limited range of fashion brands were used to evoke stereotypes in the characterisation of secondary characters. Friedman inferred that brands were used in novels to support characterisation, based on his observation that the most frequently used brand names were related to value-expressive products, but he did not conduct any further research to confirm this inference. Using an abductive approach, this study has surveyed chick lit authors to confirm that they use fashion brand names to support characterisation, choosing brands which fit their image of the character and those which have a distinctive personality. In addition, it has surveyed consumers and found that readers perceive characters as being different and distinctive based on textual cues associated with characters in the text, including fashion brand names, and that readers believe that the brand names mentioned in novels are true to what the character would use in real life. Thus, this study has found that fashion brand names, rather than automobiles or magazines, are key to characterisation in chick lit, and this inference has been tested and confirmed through survey research with authors and consumers.

Similarly, Friedman expressed concern about brand placement, or what he called 'word-of-author-advertising'. Although he differentiated between sponsored and unsponsored word-or-author advertising, he made the assumption that most of it was unsponsored. However, he suggested that, even if there is no commercial intention, the use of brand names in novels is likely to catch readers with their defences down, and therefore their appearance may influence readers' buyer behaviour, leading to a greater familiarity with individual brand names and thus a greater inclination to buy the products associated with the brand names (Friedman, 1991). This study has tested Friedman's assumptions and inferences in relation to brand placement in novels through survey research. The author survey confirmed that there is little sponsored brand placement in chick lit novels, with authors using brand names to support characterisation and add realism to their stories, rather than for commercial gain, although some authors indicated that they had occasionally received free products or gifts in response to brand mentions in their novels. The findings of the consumer survey add partial support to Friedman's concerns about the influence of brand usage in novels on the reader,

demonstrating high levels of recall and recognition for brand names used in excerpts from chick lit novels. However, the use of brand names in the excerpts did not appear to have an impact on consumers' brand attitudes. In terms of purchase intention, respondents believed that brand placements in books did not greatly influence them personally in terms of purchase behaviour; but they recognised that brand placements in books may have a subconscious influence on readers.

Thus, the present study updates and extends Friedman's study of brand names in novels, focusing on a specific contemporary literary genre (chick lit), and further exploring and testing Friedman's assumptions relating to the use of brand names by authors to support characterisation, and the potential influence of brand placement in novels on readers' buyer behaviour.

## 12.4 Conclusions

This study set out to explore the use of fashion brand names in women's popular fiction, concentrating on the relationships between fashion brands, authors, fictitious characters and readers. In doing so, it has examined the extent to which fashion brand names are used in chick lit novels, authors' reasons for using fashion brand names in their work, the relationship between characters and fashion brands in chick lit, the impact of fashion brand name usage on readers as consumers, and consumers' perception of commercial product placement in novels.

Chick lit has previously been identified as a genre which frequently references branded fashion items (Dorney, 2004; Patterson & Brown, 1999; Van Slooten, 2006) and this has been confirmed by the findings of the summative content analysis. The chick lit novels studied were found to exhibit relatively high levels of general brand name usage, with fashion-related brand names comprising around a third (33.8%) of all of the brand names used.

The study findings indicate that chick lit authors use fashion brand names to facilitate symbolic communication, supporting characterisation due to their ability to express the values, self-concepts and stereotypes of their typical brand users. The authors surveyed indicated that they used fashion brands with distinctive personalities, that fit their characters, and which were well-known to their readers.

The research outcomes suggest that characters' relationship with fashion brands is one of the elements that helps readers to differentiate between chick lit protagonists, and also that readers perceive characters as being distinctive based on textual cues associated with them in the text, including those relating to fashion consumption, however the study was unable to demonstrate a clear relationship between readers' perceptions of character personality and brand personality.

It has been suggested that the use of brand names in text may have an impact on readers as consumers. This study has confirmed that readers demonstrate high levels of recall and recognition of fashion brand names used in chick lit narratives, but no evidence was found to indicate that the appearance of brand names in the text had an impact on consumers' brand attitudes. Nevertheless, taken together with the results of previous research, the study provides support for the idea that chick lit novels are a potential product placement medium for fashion brands seeking to generate brand awareness.

The frequent mentions and positive treatment of fashion brand names in chick lit mean that it would be easy to incorporate paid-for placements of fashion brands without compromising the narrative. The results of the consumer survey suggested that readers were broadly positive about the use of brand names in novels, indicating that they preferred to see real brands rather than fictional brands in books and that the presence of real brands made the story feel more realistic, therefore product placement of fashion brands in chick lit is likely to elicit little cynicism from readers. Survey respondents were not overly concerned about paid product placement in novels, expressing similar attitudes to those reported in previous studies of the acceptability of paid product placement in films and songs, however consumers demonstrated stronger views about disclosure of commercial product placements in novels. Given that previous research suggests that disclosure of paid product placement has little impact on the effectiveness of the placement (Storm & Stoller, 2014), consumers' expectations relating to disclosure should not be viewed as a barrier to commercial product placement of fashion brands in novels.

## 12.5 Theoretical Contribution of the Thesis

This thesis makes a number of theoretical contributions. Firstly, it builds on and extends Friedman's previous study of the use of brand names in novels. Secondly, it contributes to the body of scholarly work focusing on chick lit, providing a multi-dimensional analysis of the use of brand names in the genre. Finally, it makes a theoretical contribution to the literature on product placement, examining brand placement in novels from the perspective of authors and consumers, providing additional evidence to demonstrate that brand placement in fictional texts has a positive impact on brand recall and recognition, and delivering new findings which indicate that (young female) consumers are broadly accepting of paid product placements in fictional books. These contributions are discussed in more detail below.

### 2.5.1 Extends Friedman's study of the use of brand names in novels

Friedman considered his study of the of the phenomenon of 'word-of-author advertising' to be a starting point, tracing its beginnings in post-war novels through to its rapid growth in the 1980s. He

ended his book on the subject by stating that researchers *"will be observing the future of the practice with considerable interest as we approach the turn of a new century"* (Friedman, 1991, p. 171). However, despite the continued presence of brand names in novels, with the notable exception of Stephen Brown's work in the mid-1990s (S. Brown, 1995a, 1995b) there has been little effort made to revisit, update or extend Friedman's study.

This thesis updates Friedman's research in a specific context, providing an analysis of the use of brand names in contemporary women's fiction over the period 1996 – 2017. Adopting Friedman's summative content analysis methodology (Friedman, 1987, 1991) to analyse a corpus of 19 chick lit novels, it provides evidence to suggest that the pattern of branded products and services used by characters in novels may be genre-specific, as the categories of brands frequently used in the chick lit corpus were quite different to that of Friedman's general corpus. Specifically, the study found that brands associated with fashion-related products and services accounted for the biggest category of brands used in the chick lit corpus. Using an abductive, mixed-methods approach, the study used both qualitative content analysis and surveys of chick lit authors and consumers to test Friedman's assumptions and inferences relating to the use of brand names to support characterisation. The findings confirmed that chick lit authors use fashion brand names to support characterisation and that readers perceive characters as being distinctive based on textual cues (including brand names) associated with characters in the text. In addition, the study addressed Friedman's concerns regarding the potential influence of brand placement in novels on readers. The findings of the author survey indicated that sponsored brand placement in chick lit novels is rare, however the findings of the consumer survey indicated that appearance of brand names in novels (whether sponsored or not) appears to result in brand awareness, recall and recognition. Thus, the study has enhanced our understanding of authors' use of brand names in novels and their influence on readers.

### 2.5.2 Contributes to the body of scholarly work focusing on chick lit

As previously discussed, the academic response to chick lit, and its acceptance as a legitimate area of study, has been slow to develop (Davis-Kahl, 2008; Smith, 2008). Although it has recently begun to draw some scholarly attention, the genre is still evolving, and there is a need for further research in this area (Montoro, 2012). This study provides the first comprehensive analysis of the use of fashion brand names in chick lit, examining the relationships between fashion brands, authors, fictitious characters and readers. As such, it contributes to the growing body of scholarly work focusing on this contemporary literary genre.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the use of fashion brand names in chick lit have demonstrated the prevalence and importance of fashion brand names in chick lit narratives and have illustrated the

ways in which they contribute to characterisation. The findings of the study indicate a significant difference between the use of brand names to support the characterisation of primary and secondary characters in chick lit, in so far as complex constellations of fashion brands are used to support the characterisation of the novels' protagonists, whilst a more limited range of fashion brands are used to evoke stereotypes in the characterisation of secondary characters, with very limited use of fashion brand names to support male characterisation. Fashion brands are closely linked to character identity and chick lit protagonists frequently use fashion brands in conscious self-construction. Although previous commentators have discussed the use of fashion brand names to support characterisation in chick lit novels (e.g. P. Butler & Desai, 2008; Dorney, 2004; Van Slooten, 2006) much of their evidence was purely anecdotal, this study appears to be the first to use summative content analysis to examine the association of fashion brands with characters in the texts, and also the first to survey chick lit authors about this topic, providing deeper insights into authors' reasons for using fashion brand names in their work.

### 2.5.3 Contributes to the product placement literature

Product placement is a long-established marketing communications tool, nevertheless it is generally agreed that the academic literature relating to product placement is relatively sparse (Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Storm & Stoller, 2014). The majority of existing research in this area relates to product placement in movies and TV, therefore several authors have highlighted the need to extend product placement research to new contexts (Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Karrh, 1998). Research on brand placement in narrative texts, such as novels, is identified as being particularly scarce (Olsen & Lanseng, 2012; Storm & Stoller, 2014). The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature in this area.

Karrh (1998) suggested that an element missing in existing placement research is an analysis of the aims and processes of creative professionals when combining brands with characters and storylines. This appears to be the first study to survey authors to explore their reasons for including fashion brand names in their work, their criteria for choosing specific brands and their experience of paid product placement. The survey findings indicated that chick lit authors primarily use fashion brand names in their novels to support characterisation, add realism and help the reader to visualise a character or scene more easily. Authors preferred to use well-known brand names with unique brand personalities and a distinctive "look". There was only limited evidence of paid product placement within chick lit novels. These findings enhance our understanding of authors' aims with regards to the inclusion of fashion brand names in fictional narratives.

In addition, Karrh (1998) suggested that there was a need to explore how audiences react to brand placement, and in particular, how audiences use brand names when scanning for cues about characters and their identity – learning about brands as markers of individual characteristics. This study used a survey of undergraduate students to explore how fashion brand names in text contribute to readers' construction of character. The findings indicated that readers use cues in text, such as fashion brand names, to develop their understanding of the character's personality, however there appeared to be no direct relationship between readers' perceptions of brand personality and character personality. Given that authors indicated that they used fashion brand names with distinct brand personalities to support characterisation, this is an area that warrants further investigation.

The thesis also contributes to the extant literature on product placement, confirming previous empirical findings and contributing additional evidence which demonstrates that brand placement in fictional texts has a positive impact on brand recall (Brennan, 2008; Brennan & McCalman, 2011) and recognition (Brennan & McCalman, 2011).

Finally, whilst previous studies have examined consumer perceptions of the ethics and acceptability of product placement in movies (Gupta et al., 2000; Gupta & Gould, 1997), TV programmes (Tiwsakul & Hackley, 2005) and songs (de Gregorio & Sung, 2009), little attention has been paid to consumer attitudes toward product placement in novels. Several commentators have suggested that brand placements in novels are ethically challenging because they could be considered to be a form of covert advertising, attempting to influence consumers when their cognitive guard is down (Friedman, 1991; Olsen & Lanseng, 2012). However, the findings of this study indicated that although the young, female respondents were aware of the potential subconscious influence of brand placements on the reader, they were generally accepting of paid brand placement in novels, providing that such commercial placements were disclosed. These findings shed new light on consumers' attitudes towards brand placement in novels and will also be of interest to product placement practitioners.

## 12.6 Practical Implications of the Thesis

Despite being replete with brand names, chick lit novels are rarely used as a medium for commercial product placement. Previous commentators have suggested that commercial product placement in novels is controversial (Lehu, 2007; R. A. Nelson, 2004), but the results of this study suggest that readers are broadly positive about paid product placement in fiction books, provided that such placements are accompanied by a disclosure. Similarly, it has been suggested that many authors would be reluctant to include paid placements in their work (Olsen & Lanseng, 2012), however, several of the chick lit authors who participated in this study indicated an interest in this potential source of additional revenue. The frequent mentions and positive treatment of fashion brand names in chick lit

mean that it would be easy to incorporate paid-for placements of fashion brands without disrupting the story, and the findings of this study suggest that such placements would generate high levels of brand recall and recognition. Therefore, it is proposed that chick lit novels would be a suitable placement medium for fashion brands seeking to generate brand awareness.

## 12.7 Limitations of the Study

The scope and limitations need to be noted regarding the present study.

Firstly, although the corpus of 19 novels used in this research is relatively large in comparison to some similar studies (e.g. S. Brown, 1996; Dorney, 2004; Montoro, 2012), it contains the work of just three authors, and therefore it may not be possible to extrapolate the results of the study to the chick lit genre as a whole. A larger and more diverse set of novels representing the entirety of the genre would enable more generalisations to be made from the present study.

Similarly, the author survey was based on a self-selected convenience sample, evidence was found that suggested that authors who do not use fashion brand names in their work were less likely to complete the questionnaire. Therefore, it is probable that the sample only accurately reflects the behaviour and views of a cross-section of the authors working in the genre.

Finally, the consumer survey was based on a small convenience sample of undergraduate fashion marketing students. Whilst many of the other studies in this area use similar student samples (e.g. Avramova et al., 2017a; Brennan & McCalman, 2011; de Gregorio & Sung, 2009; Gupta & Gould, 1997; Olsen & Lanseng, 2012; Storm & Stoller, 2014), students' homogeneous characteristics and differences from the population at large may limit the generalisability of the results. Fashion marketing students were specifically chosen because they generally fit the profile of chick lit readers (18-40-year-old females) and also have a good awareness and knowledge of fashion brands. Brand familiarity has been demonstrated to have a moderating effect on the evaluation of brands placed in text (Avramova et al., 2017b). By using respondents who were all likely to be familiar with the brands mentioned, the aim was to minimise the effects of differential levels of brand familiarity, however this characteristic may have affected the generalisability of the measurements of brand attitude following exposure to brands in the text.

## 12.8 Directions for Further Research

### 12.8.1 Qualitative study of readers' response to brand names in novels

In addition to addressing the issues raised in the previous section, further research is needed to fully understand the impact of the use of brand names in novels on the reader. This study used a quantitative approach to explore the impact of fashion brand use in chick lit novels. Due to the survey

methodology adopted, it was only possible to present respondents with small excerpts from novels on which to make their judgements; however, a novel is a much longer and more complex piece of prose. A natural progression of this work would be to conduct a study which required participants to read a full novel. This would allow more detailed, qualitative, exploration of the impact of the use of fashion brand names on character perception. In order to do this, it would be beneficial to work with an established reading group, or to initiate such a group. It would also be interesting to conduct pre- and post-tests on participants to more fully investigate the impacts of brand familiarity on brand recall, recognition and attitudes.

### 12.8.2 Use of chick lit novels in research on consumption, popular culture and fashion culture

Chick lit engages with contemporary culture (Benstock, 2006) providing representations of female experience. It raises issues of interest and concern to contemporary cultural studies, including commodification, consumerism, appearance and success (Knowles, 2004a). Much like its early predecessors, the silver fork novel and the novel of manners, chick lit provides its readers with an education in fashionable consumption and contemporary consumer capital (Boucher, 2016; Lynch, 1998).

The novels in the chick lit corpus used in this study provide a snapshot of late twentieth and early twenty-first century fashions, lifestyles and behaviours, reflecting the changing social, political and economic landscapes of postmodern society. The novels in the corpus span a period from 1996 to 2017 and highlight many cultural changes over this time, including developments in digital and social media, the increasing ubiquity of the smartphone in daily life and the introduction and growth of e-commerce. These changes and developments are reflected in the changing lists of brand names which appear in each novel.

Fashion is a cultural phenomenon which reflects trends in society. Incremental fashion changes occur continually, but major shifts in clothing styles generally indicate significant shifts in social relations and levels of social tension (Crane, 2012). Chick lit novels are replete with detailed descriptions of characters' clothing and references to contemporary fashion brands. Characters consciously construct and reconstruct their own identities through their fashion consumption. Cultural shifts and changes are reflected in the styles and brands that chick lit characters choose and wear. When fashion brands fail to move with and adapt to contemporary cultural trends they often fall out of fashion and disappear, again this is reflected in the lists of fashion brand names appearing in each novel.

This thesis is written from a marketing perspective focusing on the use of fashion brand names to support characterisation and the potential viability of chick lit novels as a product placement medium.

However, the data collected in the content analysis of the chick lit corpus potentially offers a rich resource for future research in the fields of consumption, popular culture and fashion culture.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A: Samples Used in Previous Research Relating to Brands in Novels

| Author | Purpose of Study | Study Sample | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Friedman (1991) | A content analysis of bestselling U.S. novels to determine the extent to which language in America had been influenced by advertising and other commercial practices in the post-war era. | 31 best-selling novels sold in the United States between 1946-1975 | • Contemporary novels only (set in the America of its time of writing)<br>• Novels set in the U.S. only<br>• Novels set in the mainstream of American Life – novels set in institutional environments were eliminated from the sample<br>• First (or second) novels from each author only |
| Hoeller (1994) | The use of designer brand names as narrative tools is examined in a comparison of two novels from different genres. | • Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987)<br>• Danielle Steel's *Crossings* (1982) | • The novels are selected due to their significant use of brand names which appears to be at variance with the literary traditions, (realist & sentimental respectively) in which Wolfe & Steel place their texts. |
| Brown (1995a) | A content analysis of brand names in two novels as part of a study examining the 'dark side of consumer behaviour'. | • Judith Krantz, *Scruples* (1978)<br>• Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho* (1991) | • Both novels make significant use of brand names, but also offer numerous representations of negative consumer behaviours. |
| Brown (1995b) | A content analysis of brand names in two "sex 'n' shopping" novels as part of a wider study examining the consumption and marketing related phenomena portrayed in the novels. | 2 best-selling 'sex & shopping' novels:<br>• Judith Krantz, *Scruples* (1978)<br>• Judith Krantz, *Scruples Two* (1992) | • Brown claims that the works of Judith Krantz were selected because they comprise 'the apotheosis of the sex & shopping genre'. |
| Dorney (2004) | An examination of the way in which chick lit and lad lit interpellate readers as sophisticated consumers of cultural and/or material artefacts. | A selection of 4 'chick lit' and 'lad lit' titles:<br>• Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996)<br>• Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (1995)<br>• India Knight's *My Life on A Plate* (2000)<br>• Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic Abroad* (2001) | • Fielding and Hornby's novels were selected to represent the beginning of the chick lit and lad lit genres.<br>• Knight and Kinsella's novels were selected as recent examples of the chick lit genre, and also to represent a particular exaggeration of typical chick lit features, |
| Bullen (2009) | An examination of brands as signifiers of class identity and affiliation. The study explores the ways in which the semiotic capacity of brands intersects with narrative strategy to promote consumption. | The analysis focuses on the first of J. Minter's 'Insiders' series:<br>• J. Minter, *The Insiders* (2004) | • The novel is selected as being representative of an emerging subgenre of young adult fiction distinguished by the conspicuous consumption of its affluent teenage characters. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Johnson, N.R. (2010) | An interpretive study using grounded theory and thematic analysis to examine consumption and brand names within the best-selling young adult romance series Gossip Girl, A-List, and Clique. | 6 teen romance novels; 2 from each of the A List Clique and Gossip Girl series:<br>• Zoey Dean, *The A List* (2003)<br>• Zoey Dean, *American Beauty: An A-List novel.* (2006)<br>• Lisi Harrison *The Clique* (2004)<br>• Lisi Harrison, *Dial L for Loser: A Clique novel* (2006).<br>• Cecily von Ziegesar, *Gossip Girl* (2002)<br>• Cecily von Ziegesar, *Nothing Can Keep Us Together: A Gossip Girl Novel.* (2005) | • The books were selected because Alloy (producer of the Gossip Girl, Clique, and A-List series) is the only company consistently producing best-selling young adult romance novels that incorporate numerous brand names into the stories<br>• The first and last/most recent book from each series was selected for analysis |
| Olsen & Langseng (2012) | An experiment manipulating plot integration and reader involvement to investigate whether brand prominence (high plot integration versus low plot integration) is positively related to favourable attitudes towards the brand. | The study uses just three pages from Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991) as stimulus material for the experiment. The text was manipulated to create two versions, featuring the Ralph Lauren brand in association with high and low plot integration items. | • *American Psycho* was selected because it is well known for using many brands throughout the text; it is easy to read, and because it is 18 years old, it is less likely that high school students (the target population) would be very familiar with the book. |

# Appendix B: Plot Synopses

*Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996)

Written in the form of a personal diary, the novel chronicles a year in the life of Bridget Jones, a thirty-something single working woman living in London. She writes about her career, self-image, vices, family, friends, and romantic relationships. During the course of the year, she becomes involved in two romantic relationships. The first is with her charming and handsome boss Daniel Cleaver, who eventually cheats on Bridget with another woman. Her second relationship is with the stuffy human-rights barrister Mark Darcy, whom she initially dislikes when they are introduced at a New Year's party, but gradually comes to admire. In the diary Bridget details her various daily struggles with her weight, her over-indulgence in alcohol and cigarettes, and her career. Bridget's friends and family are the supporting characters in her diary.

*Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (1999)

The sequel begins just over a month after the end of Bridget Jones's Diary. Bridget and Mark begin the year in a romantic relationship, but from the outset of the novel, people, situations and misunderstandings seem to conspire to keep them apart. Rebecca, a rich young solicitor and unpopular acquaintance of Bridget and her friends, schemes to split up Bridget and Mark so that she can have Mark for herself. Finding herself single once again, Bridget joins her friend Sharon on a holiday to Thailand, where she bumps into ex-boyfriend Daniel Cleaver. Sharon has a holiday romance with a man called Jed. The day before they are to leave Thailand, Bridget and Sharon find that their island hut has been broken into and their tickets and most of their money is gone. Bridget goes to the hotel nearby for assistance and finds Jed. He gives her money and a bag to carry the few things that were not stolen from their hut. Bridget is detained by the Thai authorities at the airport because the bag provided by Jed contains drugs. Bridget spends some time in a Thai jail before Mark Darcy intervenes to secure her release.

*Bridget Jones: Mad about the Boy* (2013)

Mad About the Boy begins four years after Mark's death, as Bridget emerges from her grief to engage with the dating scene again as a 51-year-old widow and mother of two young children. Bridget still obsessively logs her weight, her alcohol units and pieces of Nicorette gum, but (after being told that she is technically obese at the start of the book) successfully loses a significant amount of weight. Reflecting the changes in the dating scene since the 1990s, the book focuses on Bridget and her friends' use of social media and online dating apps. Bridget initially forms a relationship with a 29-year-old toyboy, Roxster, who she meets on Twitter, but ultimately ends the book in a more age-appropriate relationship with her son's teacher, Mr Wallaker.

*Bridget Jones's Baby: The Diaries* (2016)

This book is actually set in the period between *The Edge of Reason* and *Mad about the Boy*. After a successful romantic resolution at the end of *Mad About the* Boy, Bridget and Mark split up once again following an incident involving Daniel Cleaver at their engagement party. Mark subsequently marries his colleague, Natasha. Five years later, Bridget meets recently divorced Mark at a christening, after a night of sex, Mark announces that he has made a mistake and doesn't want to rekindle his relationship with Bridget. She later bumps into Daniel Cleaver at a literary awards event and spends the night with him at his flat. Three months later, Bridget realises that she is pregnant, but doesn't know whether Mark or Daniel is the father. Against a backdrop of reorganisation and looming threat of redundancy at work, Bridget negotiates her pregnancy whilst trying to manage the two potential fathers. Ultimately, she realises that she is still in love with Mark, and luckily, he is finally confirmed as the baby's father.

*The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic (2000)*

Becky Bloomwood works as a financial journalist at Successful Savings magazine, a job she dislikes. Becky actually knows very little about personal finance and is in serious debt due to her uncontrollable spending. On her way to a press conference at Brandon Communications, Becky notices a scarf for sale in the Denny and George shop but realizes that she has left her credit card at the office. The shop assistant to reserve the scarf for her until the end of the day. Becky tries to borrow some money from a friend at the press conference, but Luke Brandon

overhears and stops his presentation. Becky makes up a story of needing the money to buy a present for her sick aunt and Luke then lends it to her. Luke later sees Becky out with her friends at dinner, wearing the scarf herself. Some days later Luke runs into Becky and asks her to come shopping with him at Harrods. Becky assumes that it is a date and enjoys shopping with him for luggage, however, after he reveals that the luggage is actually for his girlfriend, Sacha, Becky is upset, feeling that Luke has deliberately misled and humiliated her. On a visit home, Becky learns that her parents' next-door neighbours have missed out on a substantial windfall resulting from a bank takeover, based on advice that Becky had absentmindedly given them. Becky is upset that she is partly responsible and sets out to make things right by writing an article that exposes the bank's duplicity. The article leads to Becky appearing on a daytime television show, Morning Coffee. The bank is a client of Luke's PR firm and Luke is also invited on the show. Luke is initially angry, believing that Becky wrote the article just to get back at him for treating her poorly. After arguing with Becky on the TV show, Luke concedes that she was right. Becky gets a regular slot on the show and finally earns enough to clear her debt. Luke invites Becky out for dinner at the Ritz Hotel. Based on their previous interactions she assumes that this is a business meeting, but instead they end up spending the night together at the Ritz.

*Shopaholic Abroad* (2001)

Things are going well for Becky at the start of this novel, she has a regular job on Morning Coffee and is in an established relationship with Luke. Having resolved her debt issue at the end of the first book, she has started to shop heavily again. Luke is planning to open an office in the USA and invites Becky to join him on a business trip to New York. Whilst they are there, a number of TV companies show an interest in Becky, and she takes advantage of all of New York's shopping opportunities. An article in the *Daily World* back in the UK reveals Becky's debts and calls her a fraud for telling people how to manage their money when she is unable to manage her own. Luke is angry and worried that Becky's bad publicity will impact on his business. Becky returns home in disgrace whilst Luke remains in New York, and their relationship appears to be over. Becky loses her job at Morning Coffee due to the article and is unable to extend her overdraft. On a trip to Luke's office to collect a package that she had delivered there from New York, Becky discovers that Luke's UK business is in trouble because Alicia, one of his employees, is setting up her own business and planning to steal Luke's clients. Becky contacts Luke's colleague. Michael, in America, and tells him what has been happening but asks that he does not tell Luke that the information came from her. Luke returns to London, fires the perpetrator and saves his company. Meanwhile, Becky auctions of all of her possessions, earning enough money to get herself out of debt. Luke's friend, Michael, offers Becky a job working for him in Washington, but instead she arranges her own job in New York, working as a personal shopper at Barneys. Before she leaves, Luke gives Becky back her Denny and George scarf, revealing that he bid on it at her auction. Some time later, Becky is working as a personal shopper at Barneys when Luke shows up as a customer. He reveals that he is going to be working in New York, and they get back together.

*Shopaholic Ties the Knot* (2002)

The book opens with Becky living in New York with Luke and working at Barney's as a personal shopper. Becky's best friend in the UK, Suze, is pregnant and getting married. At their wedding, Becky catches Suze's bouquet and finds a marriage proposal from Luke in it. Becky is then caught in the middle between her mother and Luke's mother Elinor, both of whom want to organise her wedding, one at her childhood home in England and one at the Plaza Hotel in New York, both on the same day. After procrastinating for some time, Becky discovers that if she doesn't go through with the Plaza wedding, she will have to pay a huge penalty, but she doesn't want to disappoint her family who are pressing ahead with plans for a wedding at home in the UK. Becky ultimately resolves this issue by holding two weddings: first a fake wedding at the Plaza to satisfy Elinor; then she and Luke take a private jet (provided one of Becky's personal shopping clients) to get married properly at Becky's home in the UK. At the end of the novel, Becky reveals to Luke that she had cashed in their New York wedding gifts from Elinor's friends and booked two first-class around-the-world tickets for their honeymoon.

*Shopaholic and Sister* (2004)

After spending nearly a year travelling the world on honeymoon, Luke and Becky decide it is time to return home to England. Before heading back, the couple embarks upon a brief trip to Milan, where Luke is scheduled to meet with a potential client. After promising Luke that she will not buy anything in Milan, Becky's resolve is weakened when she sees the opportunity to own the latest 'it' bag. There is a waiting list for the bag, but a wealthy British businessman, Nathan Temple, persuades the sales assistant to sell the handbag to Becky. Back in England, Becky and Luke visit Becky's parents, but they don't seem as excited to see Becky as she had hoped. The next day, Luke

and Becky attend the christening of Suze's twins, but Becky is disappointed to find that Suze has a new best friend, Lulu. Becky's troubles become worse when two trucks full of the purchases that she made on honeymoon arrive at Luke's flat. With her new job not due to start for several months, Luke orders Becky to keep to a budget and sort things out around the house. She resolves both problems by selling off the excess honeymoon purchases on eBay, but accidently sells some Tiffany clocks which Luke had purchased as corporate gifts for an important client. Becky's parents reveal that whilst she has been away, they have discovered that Becky has a half-sister, Jess, from a previous relationship of her father's. Becky is ecstatic – she imagines going shopping together and having a new best friend to replace Suze. However, when Becky meets Jess for the first time, she is disappointed to find that Jess is studious, thrifty, and standoffish. Becky and Luke argue when Luke when he discovers that she has arranged a meeting for him to see Nathan Temple, whom he doesn't want to work with. When Luke leaves to meet Nathan Temple in Cyprus, Becky comes to the conclusion that their marriage has fallen apart. Convinced that Luke wants her to be more like Jess, Becky decides to go to Jess' home in Northern England to learn to be thrifty. Jess wants nothing to do with Becky and tells her to return to London; however, Becky stays at the local Bed and Breakfast and befriends the village shopkeeper and his daughter. During an environmental meeting in the village, Jess finally talks to Becky and tells her that she does not believe that they are related. Becky returns to her room and begins packing for the return trip home to face Luke. Before leaving she goes to Jess's house with Jim the shopkeeper to deliver a gift. When Becky describes Jess as boring and passionless, Jim shows Becky Jess's rock collection which is housed in a cupboard identical to Becky's shoe cupboard; this proves to Becky that they are genuinely sisters. Jess has gone on a mountain hike, and Becky follows to try to catch up and apologise. Unfortunately, Becky is not appropriately dressed to hike and has a fall in bad weather. Jess stays with her on the mountainside and the two reconcile. Suze and her husband arrive with the RAF to rescue them. The book concludes with Becky and Suze helping Jess to organise a protest against a new shopping mall (which turns out to belong to Luke's new clients). Luke arrives with the clients to explain that the protestors have it wrong and the mall is not being built in the area. Becky and Luke reconcile and Becky discovers that she is pregnant.

*Shopaholic and Baby* (2007)

At the start of this book Becky is pregnant with her first child. In preparation for the arrival of the baby, Becky and Luke sell their flat in order to buy a larger house but have trouble finding anything suitable to buy. Luke wants Becky's pregnancy to be overseen by Mr. Braine (an older obstetrician who delivered Luke), but whilst shopping in a luxury baby boutique, Becky overhears a conversation about a celebrity obstetrician, Venetia Carter. Fantasising over the idea of a luxurious birthing experience, Becky convinces Luke to change doctors, and the couple attend an appointment with Venetia. Becky is taken aback when she discovers that Venetia and Luke used to date at University, but she consoles herself with the knowledge Venetia is now in a relationship. At a later appointment Becky is learns that Venetia has split with her boyfriend. As the novel progresses, Luke and Venetia spend more and more time together and Becky grows suspicious of their relationship; even going as far as to hire a private detective to follow Luke. As the baby's birth draws closer, Venetia tells Becky that Luke made a mistake marrying her and that he plans to leave Becky to pursue a relationship with Venetia once the baby is born. Once Becky has recovered from the shock of this revelation, she plans to confront the two of them together. Becky arrives at a party Venetia and Luke are attending only to find the two dancing together. The stress of witnessing this causes her to pass out. When Becky comes around, Luke is apologetic but has to rush to a meeting in Geneva. Whilst he is away Becky sends him a letter, asking him to meet her at the Oxo tower in a last-ditch effort to save their marriage. Confused, Luke rushes back to London, and explains that he hasn't been having an affair with Venetia, but that he had been trying to shelter Becky from the news that his company was in trouble. Luke believes that Becky has misunderstood Venetia, but they both agree to revert to their original obstetrician. After her baby shower, Becky comes across a Christmas gift that Venetia has sent to Luke, she goes to the clinic in order to confront Venetia, pretending to be in early labour. Family and friends arrive at the clinic anticipating the baby's birth and when Venetia comes into the delivery room, Becky tells everyone present about the obstetrician's scheme. Initially Venetia denies telling Becky that she and Luke were having an affair, but later resorts to insulting Becky and questioning why Luke married her. During the dispute, Becky's water breaks. Venetia is asked to leave and Dr. Braine arrives to deliver the baby. The book ends with Luke, Becky and baby Minnie living with Becky's parents in the Bloomwood family home.

*Mini Shopaholic* (2010)

At the start of this book, Becky, Luke and toddler Minnie are still living with Becky's parents (and beginning to outstay their welcome, resulting in tension within the family). The book is set against the background of the

financial crisis and Luke therefore asks Becky to reduce her spending. Although Becky tries, she continues to buy things for Minnie which she justifies by saying that they come from Minnie's future pocket money. Becky is working as a personal shopper at a London department store but is suspended when her bosses discover that she has been helping women to hide their expensive clothing purchases from friends and family by disguising deliveries as office supplies. Becky wants another child, but Luke has doubts because he believes that Minnie has behavioural problems. In an effort to improve Minnie's behaviour Luke hires celebrity childcare expert "Nanny Sue" to help them to become better parents. After observing the family, Nanny Sue makes a surprise assessment explaining that Minnie's behaviour is entirely normal for a toddler, but that Becky has issues with compulsive shopping and that Luke's fears about having another child stem from his abandonment issues with his mother. Luke's estranged mother, Elinor, wants to forge a relationship with her new granddaughter, and Becky visits her in secret without telling Luke. Becky decides to throw a surprise party for Luke. In her efforts to keep it a secret, she encounters several obstacles, not least the issue of throwing a grand party with a limited budget. She attempts to resolve this by bartering her designer fashion items for party services, however, things do not go as planned. The party is saved when Becky's friends offer the free use of their stately home and Luke's mother Elinor steps in and offers to foot the bill for the party in secret. The book ends with Luke revealing that he is planning to move into celebrity PR and asking Becky if she would like to come to L.A with him for 3 months where he will be representing an actress, Sage Seymour.

*Shopaholic to the Stars* (2014)

Becky, Luke and Minnie have temporarily relocated to Hollywood where Luke is handling PR for famous actress Sage Seymour. Becky can't wait to start living the A-list lifestyle, complete with celebrity sightings and shopping trips to Rodeo Drive. When Becky's planned job as a personal shopper with a department store falls through, she decides that she wants to become Sage's personal stylist, but Luke is reluctant to make the necessary introductions. Best friend Suze comes out to LA to give Becky moral support and the two of them cause havoc wherever they go, from red carpet galas to movie sets. Then, unexpectedly, Becky is offered the chance to dress Sage's arch-rival. When Becky gets embroiled in a feud between Sage and her rival, Becky becomes obsessed with being famous, pushing her relationships to the breaking point, only to find out that Sage has been using Becky as part of a publicity stunt. One of Becky's nemeses, Alicia makes a reappearance in this book as a popular mother at Minnie's pre-school. Alicia is married to the founder of a famous yoga and rehab centre. As Becky tries to make her way into showbiz, she attends the rehab centre to work on her "shopping addiction" and spread her web of influence; her friends join her, eventually leading Suze to befriend Alicia, and Suze's husband Tarquin to befriend a new-age coach at the centre. Meanwhile Becky's Dad comes out to LA to look for an old acquaintance and subsequently disappears with Tarquin. Elinor also makes a reappearance, and Becky and Luke's marriage fractures, but once again they reconcile at the end of the book.

*Shopaholic to the Rescue (2015)*

This book follows directly on from Shopaholic to the Stars. Becky's father Graham and her best friend's husband, Tarquin, have disappeared from Los Angeles saying that they have "something to take care of." Becky's Mum believes her husband has another woman in his life, while Suze is determined to save her "brainwashed" husband from a gold-digging new-age coach. Luke drives Becky, Minnie, Alicia, Suze, Becky's Mum and Janice (Becky's Mum's best friend) in an RV from LA to Las Vegas in search of the missing men. Becky is subdued in comparison to previous books, blaming herself for the disappearance of both men because she was so preoccupied with becoming famous in the previous book that she ignored her Dad. Becky is also upset that Suze has formed a close friendship with Alicia. Meanwhile Becky's treatment for shopping addiction appears to have worked, because she no longer has a desire to buy anything for herself. In the end, it turns out that Alicia and Bryce (the new-age coach) are in league with Alicia's husband to extort money from Suze and Tarquin to fund a new retreat, and Becky's Dad has been trying to get justice for a friend who had been cut out of the profits of an invention. With the help of Becky, the team run a 'sting' operation in Las Vegas to get justice for Graham's friend.

*I Heart New York* (2009)

At her best friend's wedding, children's book author, Angela Clarke, discovers that her fiancé has been cheating on her, and that her friend and new husband knew about the affair. Feeling let down by both her fiancé and her friends, and dreading having to move back in with her parents, she jumps on a plane to New York with little more than a crumpled bridesmaid dress and a pair of Louboutins. In New York she is befriended by Jenny Lopez,

the concierge at her hotel. Jenny arranges for a makeover in the hotel's beauty salon and then takes Angela shopping to buy a new designer wardrobe at Bloomingdales. Jenny introduces Angela to her group of friends and asks her to become her new roommate. Angela quickly settles into life in New York, dating two men (a Wall Street banker and the singer in an indie band) and writing about her dating adventures in a blog for a magazine. Ultimately, she falls in love with Alex (the singer) and splits up with the banker. However, she is faced with a dilemma when she is offered her dream job writing for a new UK version of the magazine – should she return home or stay with Alex in New York? Alex is unwilling to influence her decision and tells her to call him when she has made up her mind. After several months apart, during which time Angela establishes herself permanently in New York, she finally calls Alex and they reconcile.

*I Heart Hollywood* (2010)

Angela Clark is living in New York with a dream job at The Look magazine and an indie rock star boyfriend. When she is invited to Hollywood to interview hot actor and fellow Brit James Jacobs for the magazine, best friend Jenny invites herself along for the ride. Soon Angela discovers that celebrity life in Hollywood is not all glamour, gloss and sunshine. Despite his lady-killer reputation, the only person who seems genuine is James. Then a paparazzi snaps them in a compromising position at Chateau Marmont and suddenly Angela is thrust into the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. Unable to contact Alex back in New York, she worries that he will think that she is cheating on him. After several more embarrassing incidents, Angela finally discovers that James is gay and has been using her as a 'beard'. She manages to save her career by persuading him to come out in an interview with her magazine. Alex flies out to meet Angela in LA and their misunderstandings are resolved. Whilst Alex and Angela return to New York, Jenny decides to stay in LA and find work as a stylist.

*I Heart Paris* (2010)

When Angela's boyfriend Alex suggests a trip to Paris at the same time as fashion magazine Belle asks her to write a piece on the cool, hipster side of Paris, she jumps at the chance. Jenny sends her a curated set of designer outfits from LA to help with her packing, but things go wrong from the start. Her boss's assistant, Cici, books her on a different flight than Alex, her luggage is blown up at the airport and she arrives in Paris to find a pretty blonde sitting on her boyfriend's knee. Angela had romantic plans of walking with Alex by the Eiffel Tower wearing berets and whispering sweet nothings to each other, but Alex is too busy practising with his band for a huge festival. Plus, Angela has her first piece for Belle to work on, which she may have actually made some progress on if only the assistant assigned to her by French Belle wasn't deliberately trying to sabotage her on Cici's orders. When Alex's birthday dinner goes badly and his beautiful ex-girlfriend, Solene announces that she plans to reclaim him, Angela feels her Parisian getaway is really taking a turn for the worse. So, when she is faced with the choice to go back to London or stay in Paris and watch Alex and Solene get back together, she jumps on the Eurostar to return home; but a telephone conversation with Jenny persuades her to get on the next train back to Paris and talk to Alex. when Angela arrives at the music festival, she finds out that Alex has followed her to London. After an on-stage fight between Angela and Solene delays proceedings, Alex arrives in time to play his set and reconcile with Angela. On her return to New York, Angela finds that Cici was responsible for her luggage being blown up and has also had her fired from her job at the Look by forging an email from Angela and forwarding it to her Grandfather, the magazine's publisher.

*I Heart Vegas* (2011)

Angela has now moved in with Alex in New York and Jenny has returned from LA. Angela loves her life in New York, but unfortunately, she's lost her job at Look magazine, and when the immigration department gets wind of this just before Christmas, Angela needs to find a new job urgently. Or an American husband. A girls' weekend in Vegas with her best friend Jenny seems the perfect way to forget her troubles, except that Jenny's ex-boyfriend, Jeff, is also in Vegas at the same time on his stag-do. From the minute they arrive, Angela is swept up in a whirl of cocktails, outrageous outfits and late nights. Alex is in Vegas with Jeff so, running out of options to stay in the UK, Angela decides to propose a marriage of convenience to Alex on a gondola ride at the Venetian. Whilst he agrees to marry her, he doesn't seem happy about it. He drags her to a chapel for a quickie wedding, but they are horrified to find that the couple exiting the chapel before them are Jenny and Jeff. Alex decides that he can't go through with the wedding. Angela and Alex return separately to New York and Angela moves back in with Jenny after an argument with Alex. Determined to stay in New York on her own merits, Angela puts together a proposal for a new weekly women's magazine, backed by her friends and Cici's twin sister, Delia,

which enables her to apply for a visa. After 10 days of silence from Alex, Angela's friends take her ice skating at Rockerfeller Plaza on Christmas Eve where Alex finally reappears and proposes properly to Angela.

*I Heart London* (2012)

Angela is happy with her new life in New York, but when her parents finds out that she is engaged to Alex, a man they have not even met, they are both summoned to England to attend her mother's birthday party. Once again, Jenny decides to tag along for the ride. Angela spends the week permanently hungover and, mistaking this for morning sickness, Angela's mum decides that they should get married right away in the UK. Jenny becomes a manic wedding planner; Jenny and Louisa clash over best friend and bridesmaid duties and Angela's ex-boyfriend, Mark, decides that she shouldn't marry Alex. In addition, Angela has a big work presentation for the launch of her magazine, which Cici tries to sabotage again. Unsurprisingly, everything goes wrong on the day of the wedding, and when Angela's parents find out that she isn't pregnant after all, the wedding is called off. Alex and Angela finally get married three months later, back home in New York.

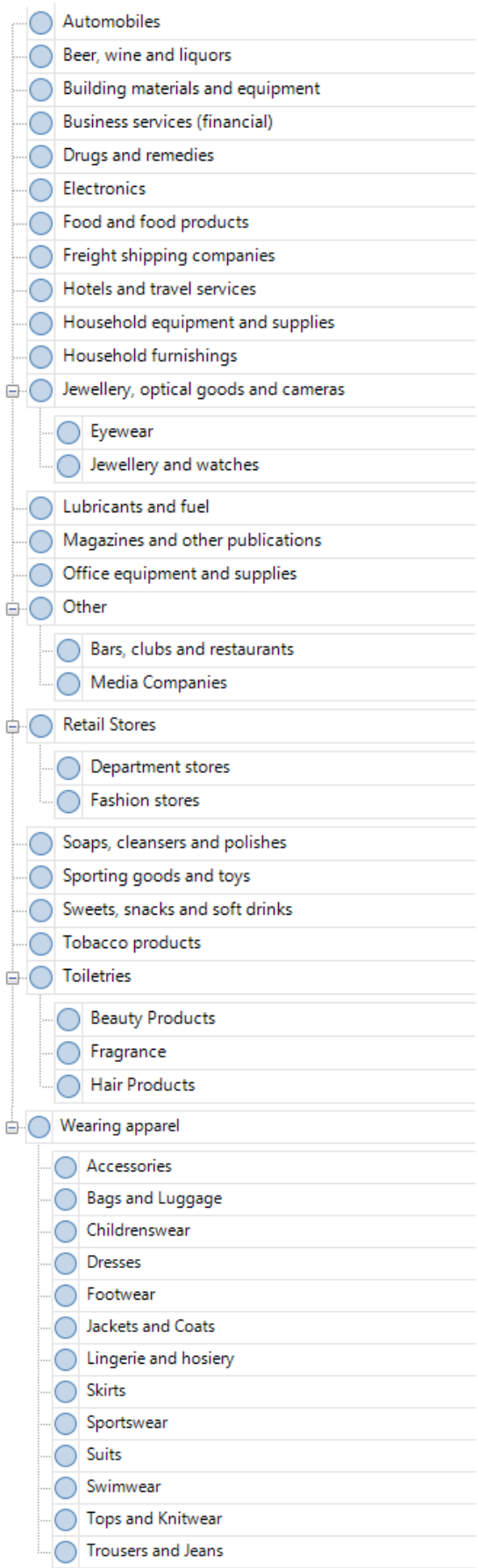
*I Heart Christmas* (2013)

Angela and Alex are now happily married and living in New York; Angela's new magazine, Gloss, is a success and everything is going well. Christmas is on the horizon and Angela and Alex have barely had time to sit down together recently. Angela is looking forward to a nice, calm Christmas spending some quality time with each other. But then she's promoted to editor of the magazine and arch enemy Cici is given the job as her assistant. Single best friend Jenny decides that she wants a baby, so Angela visits the obstetrician with her for moral support and is upset to find out that she may have her own fertility issues. Angela's best friend from England shows up unannounced for a visit (bringing her baby with her), then Alex announces that he has bought a new, larger apartment, and wants to move in straight away…. and he wants a baby. Not to mention, Angela's parents suddenly decide they're coming to New York for Christmas…and they're staying with her. It seems the relaxed Christmas Angela had been hoping for just wasn't meant to be.

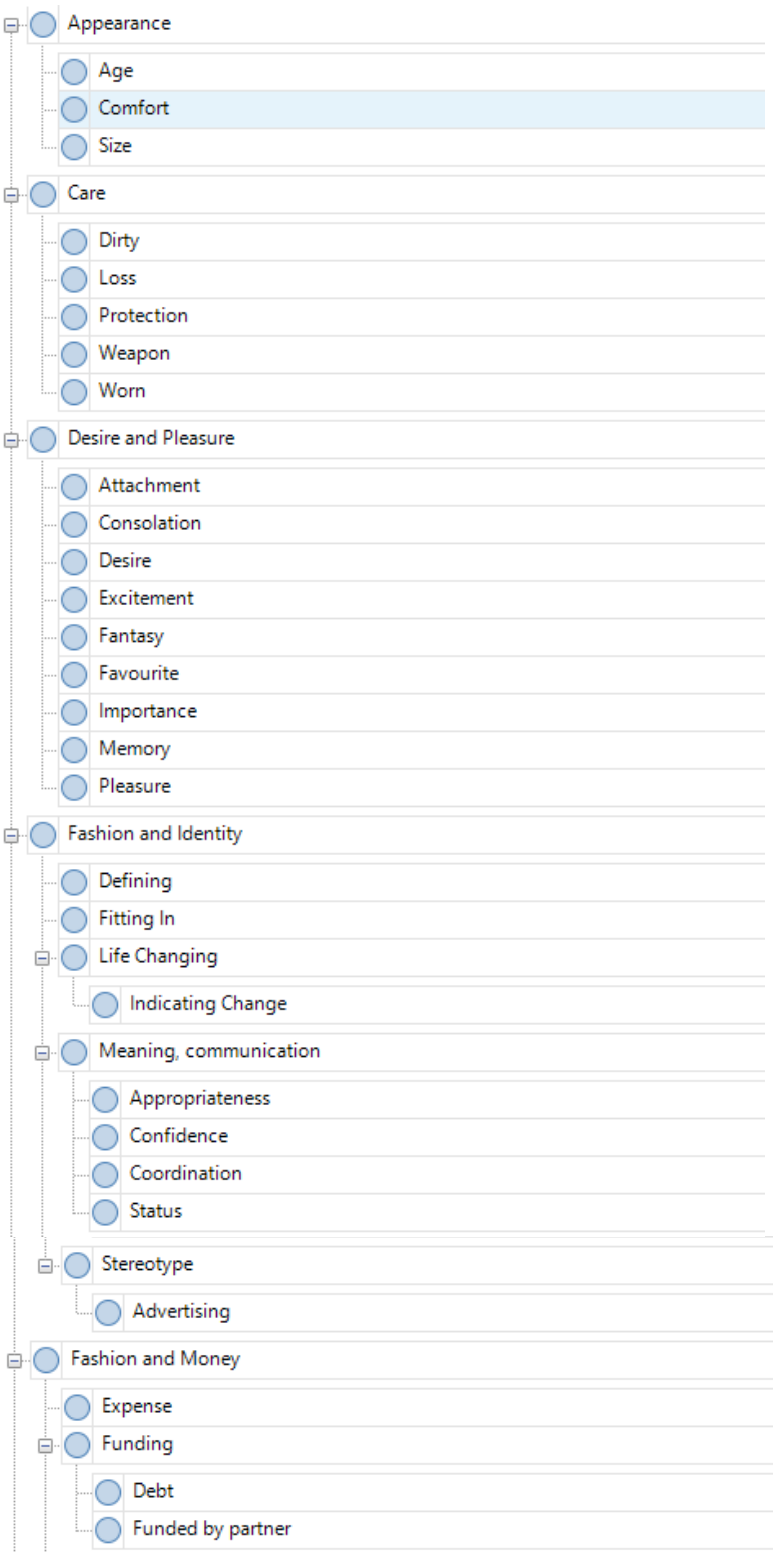
*I Heart Forever* (2017)

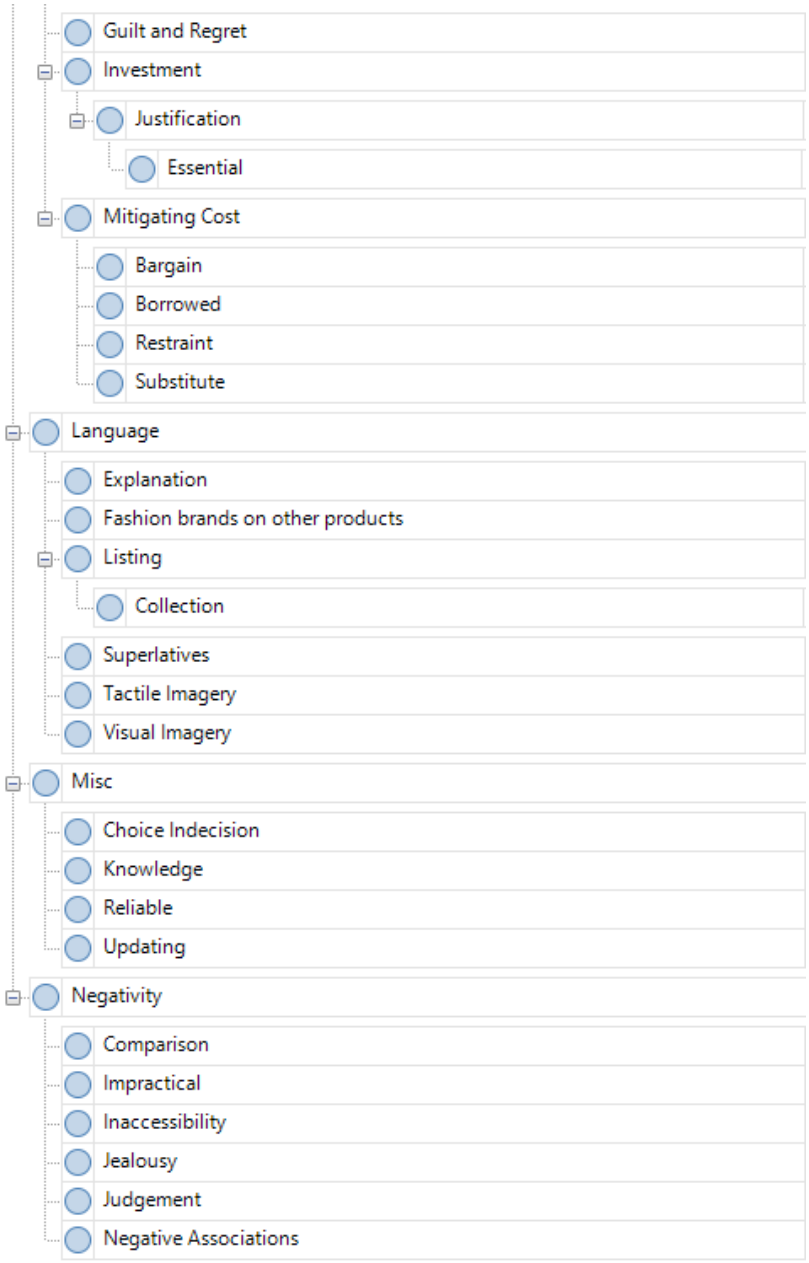
I Heart Forever takes place after the events of I Heart Christmas, Angela and Alex are still happily married and living in their new apartment in Brooklyn. Things are quiet for Alex's band, so he decides to go on a two-month backpacking trip to Asia with his friend Graham. Jenny gets engaged and starts planning the wedding of the year. Angela is still managing Gloss, a magazine she started with Delia, and everything seems to be going well – she is even starting to get along with her archenemy/assistant Cici. That is until Delia takes over the media company which controls Gloss and other popular magazines and decides to make some changes. With the threat of redundancy looming and Alex away, Angela finds out that she's pregnant. When Alex returns, he is initially delighted to find out that they are having a baby, but then he starts worrying about money. Angela finds out that her magazine is going to close but she is being offered the job of global brand director. After some consideration, she turns down the role in favour of working for Cici's new company. The book ends as Angela goes into labour.

Appendix C: Product Classification System (from NVivo)



Appendix D: Thematic Codes (from NVivo)




Guilt and Regret
Investment
Justification
Essential
Mitigating Cost
Bargain
Borrowed
Restraint
Substitute
Language
Explanation
Fashion brands on other products
Listing
Collection
Superlatives
Tactile Imagery
Visual Imagery
Misc
Choice Indecision
Knowledge
Reliable
Updating
Negativity
Comparison
Impractical
Inaccessibility
Jealousy
Judgement
Negative Associations

# Appendix E: Author Questionnaire Outline

| Attribute | Construct | Question | Author, Reference, *Adapted from*: |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Genre** | **Genre** | *How would you describe the genre(s) of the novels that you write?*<br><br>Literary fiction<br>Crime, thriller, horror<br>Science fiction, fantasy<br>Graphic novels<br>Romance<br>Chick Lit<br>Historical, mythological<br>Young Adult<br>Children's fiction<br>Other, please specify | Mintel (2016) |
| **Use of real fashion brands** | **Use of real fashion brands** | *Do you ever use real-life fashion brand names in your work (e.g.: to describe what a character is wearing or to identify a product that they are buying?)*<br><br>Yes<br>No | |
| | **Type of brands** | *If yes, what type of fashion brand names do you use?*<br><br>Luxury & designer brands<br>High street brands<br>Both | |
| | **Reasons for use** | *Why do you use real-life fashion brand names in your work? (Tick all that apply)*<br><br>To add a sense of realism<br>To support characterisation<br>To help the reader visualise the character or scene more clearly<br>To reflect the geographical setting of the novel (e.g.: French brands in Paris)<br>To reflect the historical setting of the novel<br>To appeal to readers' love of fashion | (Brown, 2011; de Botton, 1996; Everett, 1992; Hoeller, 1994; Mullan, 2006) |
| | | I like or wear the brands myself<br>Other (please specify) | |
| | **Important brand characteristics** | *How important are the following factors when you are choosing a fashion brand name to include in your work? (5 point scale 1=Not at all important, 5 = Extremely important)*<br><br>The brand has a very distinctive look<br>The brand has its own unique "personality"<br>The brand is already well known to readers<br>The brand is new to the market<br>The brand is a niche brand that only real fashion fans would recognise<br>The brand is something that my readers probably already buy/wear themselves<br>The brand is something that my readers aspire to buy/wear<br>The brand is frequently mentioned in other novels<br>The brand has a natural congruency with the character<br>The brand has a natural congruency with the geographical setting<br>The brand has a natural congruency with the historical period | (Karrh et al., 2003) |
| **Use of fictional brands** | **Use of fictional brands** | *Do you ever make up your own fashion brand names to use in your work (ie: create fictional brands)?*<br><br>Yes<br>No | |
| | **Reasons for use** | *If yes, in what circumstances would you use a fictional brand over a real-life brand? (Open question)* | |
| **Reader Response** | **Readers' comments** | *Do your readers ever comment on the use of fashion brand names in your books?*<br><br>Yes<br>No | |
| **Product Placement** | **Paid placement** | *Have you ever been paid a fee (financial incentive) to include a specific brand name in your books?* | (Johnson, 2010; Lehu, 2007; Nelson, 2004; Ślósarz, 2018) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Yes – a fashion brand<br>Yes – another type of brand<br>No | |
| | **Business arrangements** | *If so, who negotiated the fee?*<br><br>Me<br>My agent<br>My publisher<br>Other (please specify) | |
| | **Alternative incentives** | *Have you ever accepted another type of incentive (e.g.: free products) to include a specific brand name in your books?*<br><br>Yes – a fashion brand<br>Yes – another type of brand<br>No | |
| | **Gifting** | *Have you ever been gifted with free products by a brand that you have featured in one of your books after the book has been published?*<br><br>Yes – by a fashion brand<br>Yes – by another type of brand<br>No | |

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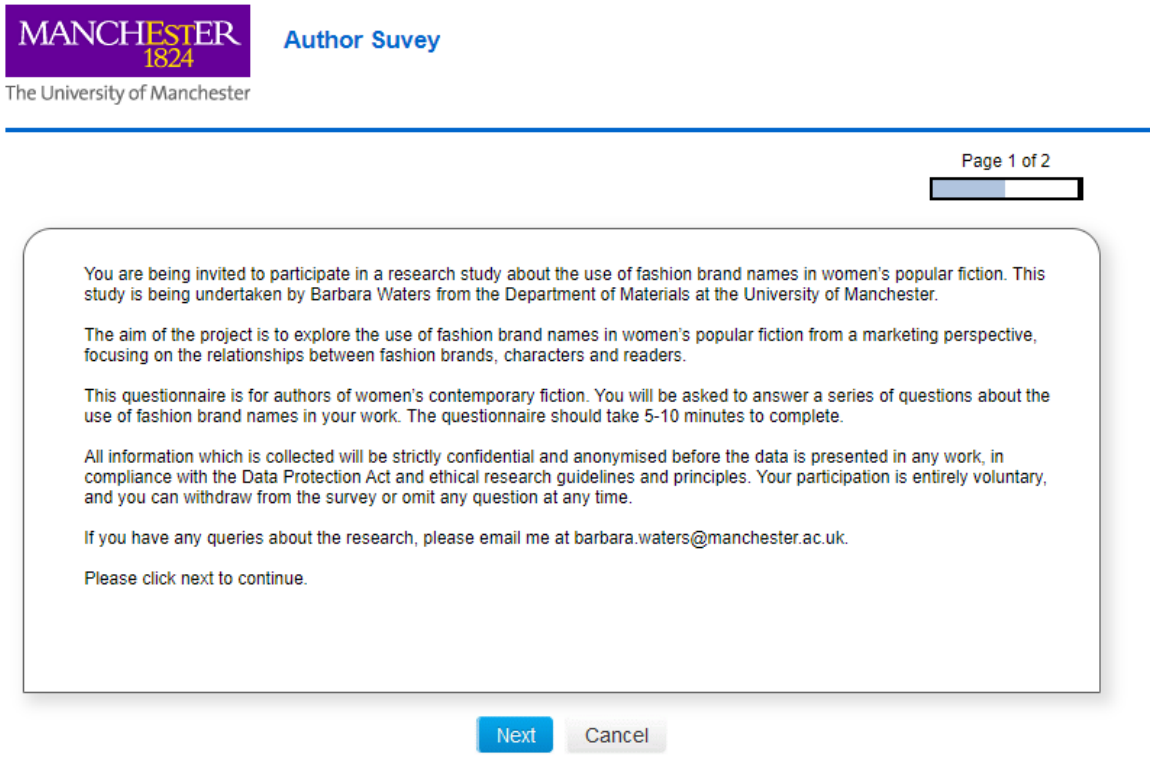
Appendix F: Final Author Questionnaire (from SelectSurvey.net)



MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

**Author Suvey**

Page 1 of 2

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the use of fashion brand names in women's popular fiction. This study is being undertaken by Barbara Waters from the Department of Materials at the University of Manchester.

The aim of the project is to explore the use of fashion brand names in women's popular fiction from a marketing perspective, focusing on the relationships between fashion brands, characters and readers.

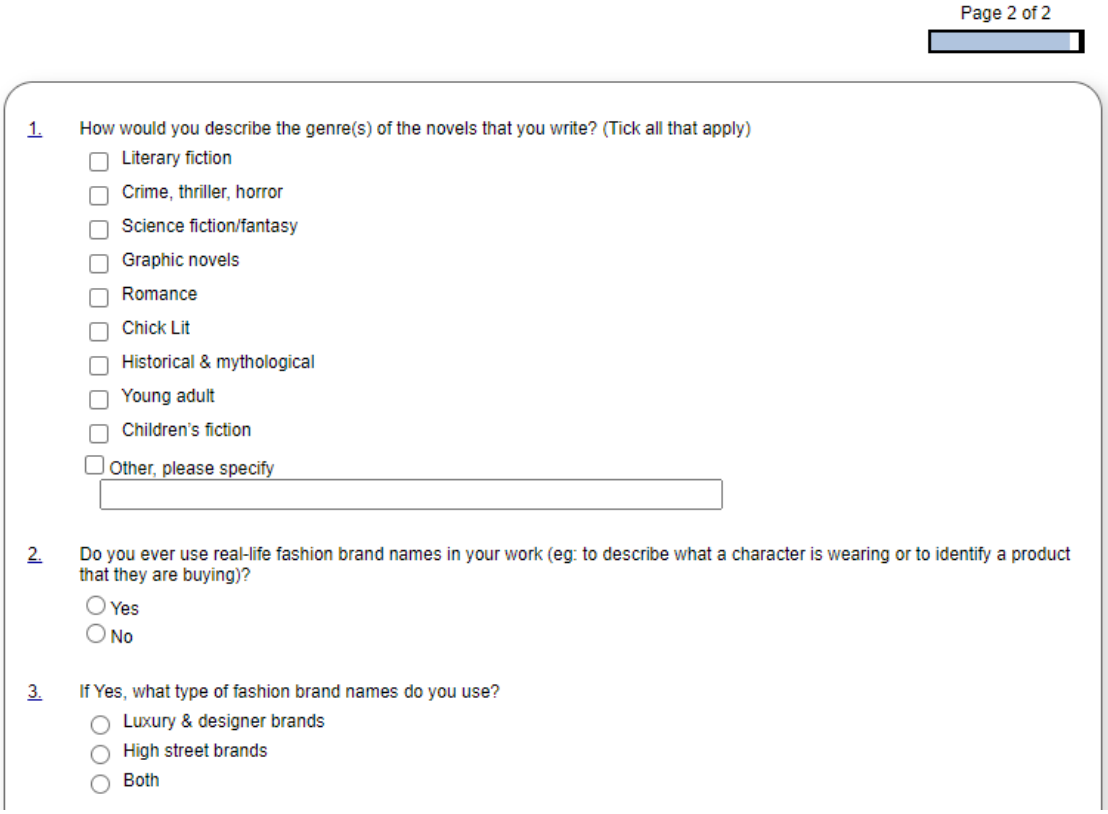
This questionnaire is for authors of women's contemporary fiction. You will be asked to answer a series of questions about the use of fashion brand names in your work. The questionnaire should take 5-10 minutes to complete.

All information which is collected will be strictly confidential and anonymised before the data is presented in any work, in compliance with the Data Protection Act and ethical research guidelines and principles. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the survey or omit any question at any time.

If you have any queries about the research, please email me at barbara.waters@manchester.ac.uk.

Please click next to continue.

Next Cancel



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1. How would you describe the genre(s) of the novels that you write? (Tick all that apply)
   - ☐ Literary fiction
   - ☐ Crime, thriller, horror
   - ☐ Science fiction/fantasy
   - ☐ Graphic novels
   - ☐ Romance
   - ☐ Chick Lit
   - ☐ Historical & mythological
   - ☐ Young adult
   - ☐ Children's fiction
   - ☐ Other, please specify

2. Do you ever use real-life fashion brand names in your work (eg: to describe what a character is wearing or to identify a product that they are buying)?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No

3. If Yes, what type of fashion brand names do you use?
   - ○ Luxury & designer brands
   - ○ High street brands
   - ○ Both

4. Why do you use real-life fashion brand names in your work? (Tick all that apply)

- [ ] To add a sense of realism
- [ ] To support characterisation
- [ ] To help the reader visualise the character or scene more clearly
- [ ] To reflect the geographical setting of the novel (eg: French brands in Paris)
- [ ] To reflect the historical setting of the novel
- [ ] To appeal to reader's love of fashion
- [ ] I like or wear the brands myself
- [ ] Other, please specify

5. How important are the following factors when you are choosing a fashion brand name to include in your work: (1 is not at all important, 5 is extremely important).

| | 1. Not at all important | 2. | 3.Neither important or unimportant | 4. | 5.Extremely important |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The brand has a very distinctive look | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand has its own unique "personality" | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand is already well known to readers | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand is new to the market | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand is a niche brand that only real fashion fans would recognise | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand is something that my readers probably already buy/wear themselves | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand is something that my readers aspire to buy/wear | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand is frequently mentioned in other novels | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the character | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the geographical setting | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The brand has a natural congruency with the historical period | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

6. Do you ever make up your own fashion brand names to use in your work (ie: create fictional brands)?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

7. If yes, in what circumstances would you use a fictional brand over a real-life brand?

8. Do your readers ever comment on the use of fashion brand names in your books?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

9. Have you ever been paid a fee (financial incentive) to include a specific brand name in your books? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Yes – a fashion brand
- ☐ Yes – another type of brand
- ☐ No

10. If so, who negotiated the fee?

- ○ Me
- ○ My agent
- ○ My publisher
- ○ Other, please specify

11. Have you ever accepted another type of incentive (eg: free products) to include a specific brand name in your books? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Yes – a fashion brand
- ☐ Yes – another type of brand
- ☐ No

12. Have you ever been gifted with free products by a brand that you have featured in one of your books after the book has been published? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ Yes - by a fashion brand
- ☐ Yes - by another type of brand
- ☐ No

Thank You!

By clicking the 'Done' button below, you are consenting to your participation in this study and your answers will be submitted.

Back Done Cancel

# Appendix G: Consumer Questionnaire Outline

| Attribute | Construct | Question | Author, Reference, *Adapted from*: |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Demographics** | **Gender** | *What is your gender?*<br>Female, Male, Non-binary, Prefer not to answer | Mintel (2016)<br>GDS Design Community (2016) |
| | **Age** | *Which of the following age groups do you belong to?*<br>18-24, 25-44, 45-64, 65+, Prefer not to answer | Mintel (2016) |
| **Reading Habits** | **Book Format** | *Thinking particularly about fiction books (eg: novels), which, if any, of the following have you done in the last 12 months?*<br>Read a physical print fiction book<br>Read a fiction book on an e-reader<br>Read a fiction book on a tablet<br>Read a fiction book on a laptop<br>Read a fiction book on a smartphone<br>Read a fiction book on a desktop computer<br>None of these | Mintel (2016) |
| | **Genre** | *Which, if any, of the following genres of fiction books have you read in the last 12 months?*<br>General or literary fiction<br>Crime, thriller, horror<br>Science fiction, fantasy<br>Graphic novels<br>Romance<br>Historical, mythological<br>None of these | Mintel (2016) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Character Personality** | **Personality traits** | *Here are a number of personality traits. Please rate the extent to which you think each trait applies to [character]. (7 point scale 1=disagree strongly, 7= agree strongly)*<br>Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT reserved, or shy)<br>Agreeable (that is; kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT aggressive, or cold)<br>Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT careless, or impulsive)<br>Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed)<br>Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT conventional). | Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann (2003)<br>Mulyanegara, Tsarenko, & Anderson (2009) |
| | **Attitude towards character** | *Now consider how you feel about Angela as a fictional character. How would you describe her? (7 point bipolar scale)*<br>unlikeable/likeable<br>unpleasant/pleasant<br>unattractive/attractive | Russell & Stern (2006)<br>Avramova, Pelsmacker, & Dens (2017) |
| | **Self-Character Similarity** | *How similar to [character] do you think you are?" (7 point bipolar scale, 1=not similar at all, 7=very similar)*<br>*To what extent do you agree with the following statements:*<br>*I can identify with [character] in the story*<br>*I can easily put myself in the shoes of [character] in this story (7 point scale, 1= strongly disagree and 7=strongly disagree)* | Bhatnagar & Wan (2011) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Brand Recall** | **Unaided Recall** | *Please list all of the commercial brand names (ie: names of products or stores) that you remember being mentioned in [character's] story:*<br><br>Open question – write in answer | Brennan & McCalman (2011) |
| **Relationship between character and brand** | **Perceived fit** | *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The brands mentioned in the story fit [character's] personality (7 point scale 1=disagree strongly, 7= agree strongly)* | Avramova, Pelsmacker, & Dens (2017) |
| **Brand Recall** | **Prompted Recall** | *Now, thinking about all 3 excerpts that you have read, please select all of the brand names that you remember appearing in the stories:*<br><br>List of 20 brands – all brands in excerpts plus 5 others. | Brennan & Babin (2004) |
| **Brand attitude** | **Liking** | *Please indicate the extent to which you like each of the following brands: (7 point scale, 1=Strongly Dislike, 7=Strongly Like)*<br><br>List of 20 brands – all brands in excerpts plus 5 others. | Avramova, Pelsmacker, & Dens (2017)<br>Bergkvist & Rossiter (2007) |
| **Brand Personality** | **Brand Personality Traits** | *Now, thinking particularly about [brand] as a brand, Please rate the extent to which you agree that each adjective describes [brand]: Seven point scale for 4 brand names presented in the excerpts (1=Disagree Strongly, 7=Agree Strongly).*<br><br>Trustful<br>Reliable<br>Persevering<br>Creative<br>Friendly<br>Outgoing<br>Active<br>Adventurous<br>Cool<br>Simple<br>Caring | Mulyanegara, Tsarenko, & Anderson (2009) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Attitudes to Brand Placement in books** | **Ethics** | *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:* (5 point scale, 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)<br><br>It is unethical to influence readers by using brand names in fiction books.<br><br>I hate seeing brand name products in fiction books if they are placed for commercial purposes<br><br>I don't mind if authors receive money or other compensation from companies for placing their brands in a fiction book<br><br>Brands mentioned in a fiction book, for which the author receives payment from a company, should be disclosed at the beginning of the book. | de Gregorio & Sung (2009)<br>Gupta & Gould (1997) |
| | **Influence** | I have bought brands because I have read about them in fiction books.<br><br>I am more likely to buy brands I am exposed to in a fiction book than those I see advertised.<br><br>When I read fiction books, I pay attention to the brands they mention.<br><br>Readers are subconsciously influenced by the brands they read about in fiction books.<br><br>I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books. | |
| | **Realism** | I prefer to see real brands mentioned in fiction books rather than made-up brands.<br><br>The presence of brand names in a fiction book makes it more realistic.<br><br>The brands mentioned in fiction books are true to what the character would use in real life. | |
| | **Regulation** | The government should regulate the use of brand names in fiction books.<br><br>The paid placement of brands in fiction books should be completely banned. | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | I think that when brands are mentioned in fiction books, it is usually a form of paid advertising | |

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Appendix H: Final Consumer Questionnaire (from onlinesurveys.ac.uk)

# Chicklit Survey

## Page 1: Participant Information

**University of Huddersfield**

**School of Art, Design and Architecture**

**Research Project Title: The Use of Fashion Brand Names in Chick Lit**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact me if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. I should like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking time to read this information.

**What is the purpose of the project?**

The research is being undertaken as part of a PhD programme at the University of Huddersfield. The aim of the project is to explore the use of fashion brand names in women's popular fiction (chick lit) from a marketing perspective, focusing on the relationships between fashion brands, fictitious characters and readers.

**Why have I been chosen?**

I want to survey the opinions of potential chick lit readers.

**Do I have to take part?**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, so please do not feel obliged to take part. Refusal will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw from the study at any stage without giving an explanation. Please be aware that if you do decide to participate, you may decide not to answer any specific question and you may stop participating at any time.

**What do I have to do?**

You will be asked to read some passages from chick lit novels and answer some simple questions. This should take no more than 15 minutes of your time.

**Are there any disadvantages to taking part?**

There should be no foreseeable disadvantages to your participation. If you are unhappy or have

further questions at any stage in the process, please address your concerns initially to me if this is appropriate. Alternatively, please contact my supervisor, Dr. Tracy Cassidy at the School of Art, Design & Architecture, The University of Huddersfield (email: T.D.Cassidy@hud.ac.uk)

**Will all my details be kept confidential?**

All information which is collected will be strictly confidential and anonymised before the data is presented in any work, in compliance with the Data Protection Act and ethical research guidelines and principles.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of this research will be written up in my PhD thesis. The results may also be used in conference papers and journal articles. If you would like a copy of the results please contact me.

**What happens to the data collected?**

The data collected will be stored electronically in password-protected storage areas. Only the researcher will have access to the raw data. Data will be analysed and reported on an aggregate basis; any direct quotes from individual respondents will be anonymised. All data will be deleted when no longer required for the purposes of the study.

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**

No, but if you wish to enter a prize draw for a chance to win one of two £20 Amazon gift vouchers, you can add your email at the end of the questionnaire.

**Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?**

The study has been reviewed and approved by my research supervisor, Dr. Tracy Cassidy in the School of Art Design & Architecture at the University of Huddersfield, and by the School Research Ethics & Integrity Committee.

**Name & Contact Details of Researcher:**

Barbara Waters
Email: b.e.waters@leeds.ac.uk

## Page 2: Participant Consent Form

I confirm that I have read and understood the participant Information sheet related to this research. ✱ *Required*

- Yes

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ✱ *Required*

- Yes

I understand that the data generated by this survey will be used in the researcher's publications on this topic and that all of my responses will be anonymised. ✱ *Required*

- Yes

I agree to take part in the above study ✱ *Required*

- Yes

By submitting this form you are indicating that you have read the description of the study, are over the age of 18, and that you agree to the terms as described.

## Page 3: Classification Questions

What is your gender?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Which of the following age groups do you belong to?

- ○ 18-24
- ○ 25-44
- ○ 45-64
- ○ 65+
- ○ Prefer not to answer

## Page 4: Your Reading Habits

Thinking particularly about fiction books (eg: novels), which, if any, of the following have you done in the last 12 months? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Read a physical print fiction book (paperback or hardback)
- ☐ Read a fiction book on an e-reader
- ☐ Read a fiction book on a tablet
- ☐ Read a fiction book on a laptop
- ☐ Read a fiction book on a smartphone
- ☐ Read a fiction book on a desktop computer
- ☐ None of these

Which, if any, of the following genres of fiction books have you read in the last 12 months? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ General or literary fiction
- ☐ Crime, thriller, horror
- ☐ Science fiction, fantasy
- ☐ Graphic novel
- ☐ Romance
- ☐ Historical, mythological
- ☐ None of these

## Page 5: Angela's Story

Please read the following description of a fictional shopping trip undertaken by “Angela”:

> *The bags were helpfully right where I stumbled off the escalator, but the number of bags crammed into this small space was completely overwhelming. Stalking around the counters and shelves, I evaded the gaze of the assistants for as long as I could before I braved a young brunette with approximately three hairs out of place. A relative slattern by Soho standards.*
>
> *‘Hi, can I help you find something?’ she asked.*
>
> *‘I’m looking for a bag,’ I nodded, trying not to sound like someone who really didn’t do this often, but at the same time not wanting to get fleeced out of my of entire wedding savings for a handbag. ‘Something I can use for everyday really, for carrying my laptop, my wallet, phone, stuff like that.’*
>
> *‘OK.’ She began rocketing around the department, pulling out various bags of various sizes, all extra-ordinarily expensive, I was sure. ‘You’ll probably want leather if it’s for everyday. It’s the most durable material and it wears well. And you want room for your laptop …’ she paused, biting her full bottom lip and glancing around the shelves before pulling some more bags out from hidden drawers behind her counter. ‘Any favourite designers?’*
>
> *‘Marc Jacobs?’ I offered, thinking back to yesterday’s induction into the fashion floor. It seemed to be the right answer because she smiled and finished off the collection of luxury leather in front of her with the most beautiful, beautiful bag I had ever laid eyes on. I reached out to stroke its buttery softness, the dark brown of the leather looked like milk chocolate and the subtle gold detailing winked at me.*
>
> *‘Buy me,’ it whispered tantalizingly. ‘I complete you.’*
>
> *The sales girl was making noises about updated classic satchel design, Italian leather and brass fixings but I was already working out how much I could ram in there and still wedge my arm through the strap.*
>
> *‘How much?’ I asked, picking it up delicately. It was heart-stoppingly beautiful. Was it wrong that I felt more passion for this bag than I had felt in my and Mark’s bedroom for the last three years?*
>
> *‘It’s $895.00,’ she said, sensing the commission. I figured she could smell a sale like a horse smells fear. ‘Plus tax.’*
>
> *My shoddy internal exchange rate brought that out at more or less £500. I’d never ever spent more than thirty quid on a bag. But I needed it. I thought back to when Louisa and I went shopping for bridesmaid shoes in Harvey Nicks and reasoned with myself. If she could spend £400 on my shoes for one day (albeit guilt shoes, I realized now) I could*

*invest £500 in a bag I would use for the rest of my life. I'd just use it all the time. For every occasion. Every single day.*

*'Anything else?' the girl piped up.*

*I smiled feverishly back at her. 'I need a clutch.'*

*A thousand dollars down and two amazing handbags up, I sloped down Bloomingdale's steps into the searing summer heat. I figured at £500 I had to get my money out of this bad boy by using it absolutely immediately, rolling my Next pleather wonder into as small a scrunchy ball and dropping it into my Big Brown Bag.*

Excerpt from: Kelk, Lindsey (2009) *I Heart New York*, Harper

## Page 6: Angela's Story

Here are a number of personality traits. Please rate the extent to which you agree that each trait applies to Angela.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional). | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

Now consider how you feel about Angela as a fictional character. How would you describe her?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unlikeable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Likeable |
| Unpleasant | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Pleasant |
| Unattractive | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Attractive |

How similar to Angela do you think you are?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not Similar at All | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Very Similar |

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I can identify with Angela in this story | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I can easily put myself in the shoes of Angela in this story | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 7: Angela's Story

Please list all of the commercial brand names (ie: names of products or stores) that you remember being mentioned in Angela's story:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Angela's personality"

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Strongly Agree |

## Page 8: Bridget's Story

Please read the following description of a fictional shopping trip undertaken by “Bridget”:

> *The heat has made my body double in size, I swear. I am never going in a communal changing room again. I got a dress stuck under my arms in Warehouse while trying to lift it off and ended up lurching around with inside-out fabric instead of a head, tugging at it with my arms in the air, rippling stomach and thighs on full display to the assembled sniggering fifteen-year-olds. When I tried to pull the stupid dress down and get out of it the other way it got stuck on my hips.*
>
> *I hate communal changing rooms. Everyone stares sneakily at each other’s bodies, but no one ever meets anyone’s eye. There are always girls who know that they look fantastic in everything and dance around beaming, swinging their hair and doing model poses in the mirror saying, ‘Does it make me look fat?’ to their obligatory obese friend, who looks like a water buffalo in everything.*
>
> *It was a disaster of a trip, anyway. The answer to shopping, I know, is simply to buy a few choice items from Nicole Farhi, Whistles and Joseph but the prices so terrify me that I go scuttling back to Warehouse and Miss Selfridge, rejoicing in a host of dresses at £34.99, get them stuck on my head, then buy things from Marks & Spencer because I don’t have to try them on, and at least I’ve bought something.*
>
> *I have come home with four things, all of them unsuitable and unflattering. One will be left behind the bedroom chair in an M&S bag for two years. The other three will be exchanged for credit notes from Warehouse, etc., which I will then lose. I have thus wasted £119, which would have been enough to buy something really nice from Nicole Farhi, like a very small T-shirt.*

Excerpt from: Fielding, Helen (1996) *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Picador

## Page 9: Bridget's Story

Here are a number of personality traits. Please rate the extent to which you agree that each trait applies to Bridget.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional). | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

Now consider how you feel about Bridget as a fictional character. How would you describe her?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unlikeable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Likeable |
| Unpleasant | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Pleasant |
| Unattractive | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Attractive |

How similar to Bridget do you think you are?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not Similar at All | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Very Similar |

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I can identify with Bridget in this story | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I can easily put myself in the shoes of Bridget in this story | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 10: Bridget's Story

Please list all of the commercial brand names (ie: names of products or stores) that you remember being mentioned in Bridget's story:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Bridget's personality"

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Strongly Agree |

## Page 11: Becky's Story

Please read the following description of a fictional shopping trip undertaken by "Becky":

> *I know I went out just planning to buy a single outfit for my screen test. But I ended up . . . Well, I suppose I just got a bit . . . a bit carried away. So my final list of purchases goes like this:*
>
> *1. Moschino jacket*
>
> *2. Knee-length Barney's skirt*
>
> *3. Calvin Klein underwear*
>
> *4. Pair of new tights and . . .*
>
> *5. Vera Wang cocktail dress*
>
> *OK. Just . . . before you say anything, I know I wasn't supposed to be buying a cocktail dress. I know that when Erin said, 'Are you interested in evening wear at all?' I should simply have said 'no'.*
>
> *But oh God. Oh God. That Vera Wang dress. Inky purple, with a low back and glittering straps. It just looked so completely movie-star perfect. Everyone crowded round to see me in it – and when I drew back the curtain, they all gasped.*
>
> *I just stared at myself, mesmerized. Entranced by what I could look like; by the person I could be. There was no question. I had to have it. I had to. As I signed the credit card slip . . . I wasn't me any more. I was Grace Kelly. I was Gwyneth Paltrow. I was a glittering somebody else who can casually sign a credit card slip for thousands of dollars while smiling and laughing at the assistant, as though this were a nothing-purchase.*
>
> *Thousands of dollars. Although, for a designer like Vera Wang, that price is actually quite . . .*
>
> *Well, it's really very . . .*
>
> *Oh God, I feel slightly sick. I don't even want to think about how much it cost. I don't want to think about those noughts. The point is, I'll be able to wear it for years. Yes! Years and years. And I need designer clothes if I'm going to be a famous television star. I mean I'll have important events to go to – and I can't just turn up in M&S, can I?*

Excerpt from: Kinsella, Sophie (2001) *Shopaholic Abroad*, Black Swan

## Page 12: Becky's Story

Here are a number of personality traits. Please rate the extent to which you agree that each trait applies to Becky.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional). | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

Now consider how you feel about Becky as a fictional character. How would you describe her?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unlikeable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Likeable |
| Unpleasant | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Pleasant |
| Unattractive | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Attractive |

How similar to Becky do you think you are?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not Similar at All | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Very Similar |

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I can identify with Becky in this story | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I can easily put myself in the shoes of Becky in this story | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 13: Becky's Story

Please list all of the commercial brand names (ie: names of products or stores) that you remember being mentioned in Becky's story:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Becky's personality"

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Strongly Agree |

## Page 14: Fashion Brands

Now, thinking about all 3 excerpts that you have read, please select all of the brand names that you remember appearing in the stories:

- ☐ Barneys
- ☐ Bloomingdales
- ☐ Burberry
- ☐ Calvin Klein
- ☐ Dolce & Gabbana
- ☐ Guess
- ☐ Joseph
- ☐ Harvey Nichols
- ☐ Karen Millen
- ☐ Levis
- ☐ Marc Jacobs
- ☐ Marks & Spencer
- ☐ Miss Selfridge
- ☐ Moschino
- ☐ Next
- ☐ Nicole Farhi
- ☐ Top Shop
- ☐ Warehouse
- ☐ Whistles
- ☐ Vera Wang

Please indicate the extent to which you like each of the following brands:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Dislike | Disike | Mildly Disike | Undecided | Mildly Like | Like | Strongly Like |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barneys | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Bloomingdales | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Burberry | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Calvin Klein | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Dolce & Gabbana | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Guess | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Joseph | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Harvey Nichols | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Karen Millen | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Levis | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Marc Jacobs | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Marks & Spencer | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Miss Selfridge | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Moschino | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Next | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Nicole Farhi | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Top Shop | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Warehouse | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Whistles | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Vera Wang | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 15: Marc Jacobs

Now, thinking particularly about Marc Jacobs as a brand, Please rate the extent to which you agree that each adjective describes Marc Jacobs:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trustful | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Reliable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Persevering | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Creative | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Friendly | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Outgoing | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Active | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Adventurous | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Cool | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Simple | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Caring | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 16: Marks and Spencer

Now, thinking particularly about Marks & Spencer as a brand, Please rate the extent to which you agree that each adjective describes Marks & Spencer:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trustful | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Reliable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Persevering | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Creative | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Friendly | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Outgoing | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Active | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Adventurous | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Cool | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Simple | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Caring | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 17: Warehouse

Now, thinking particularly about Warehouse as a brand, Please rate the extent to which you agree that each adjective describes Warehouse:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trustful | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Reliable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Persevering | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Creative | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Friendly | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Outgoing | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Active | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Adventurous | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Cool | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Simple | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Caring | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 18: Vera Wang

Now, thinking particularly about Vera Wang as a brand, Please rate the extent to which you agree that each adjective describes Vera Wang:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Undecided | Mildly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trustful | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Reliable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Persevering | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Creative | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Friendly | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Outgoing | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Active | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Adventurous | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Cool | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Simple | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Caring | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 19: Brand Placement

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| It is unethical to influence readers by using brand names in fiction books. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I hate seeing brand name products in fiction books if they are placed for commercial purposes | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I don't mind if authors receive money or other compensation from companies for placing their brands in a fiction book | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Brands mentioned in a fiction book, for which the author receives payment from a company, should be disclosed at the beginning of the book. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I have bought brands because I have read about them in fiction books. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I am more likely to buy brands I am exposed to in a fiction book than those I see advertised. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| When I read fiction books, I pay attention to the brands they mention. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Readers are subconsciously influenced by the brands they read about in fiction books. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I prefer to see real brands mentioned in fiction books rather than made-up brands. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The presence of brand names in a fiction book makes it more realistic. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The brands mentioned in fiction books are true to what the character would use in real life. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The government should regulate the use of brand names in fiction books. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| The paid placement of brands in fiction books should be completely banned. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| I think that when brands are mentioned in fiction books, it is usually a form of paid advertising | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Page 20: Prize Draw

If you would like to enter the prize draw for a chance to **win one of two £20 Amazon gift vouchers**, please enter your email address in the box below (your email address will only be used for the purposes of the prize draw - your responses will remain anonymous).

## Page 21: Thank You!

Thank you very much for your participation.

## Bridget Jones

| | A : Bridget Jonesss Diary | B : Bridget Jones -The Edge of Reason | C : Bridget Jones - Mad about the boy | D : Bridget Jonesss Baby | TOTAL across Bridget Jones Series | Percent | Percentage Frequency in Friedman's Corpus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 : Automobiles | 11 | 11 | 8 | 2 | **32** | 3.0 | 24.7 |
| 2 : Beer, wine and liquors | 16 | 2 | 7 | 0 | **25** | 2.3 | 6.6 |
| 3 : Building materials and equipment | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **1** | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| 4 : Business services (financial) | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | **8** | 0.7 | 2.2 |
| 5 : Drugs and remedies | 1 | 5 | 17 | 0 | **23** | 2.1 | 5.0 |
| 6 : Electronics | 3 | 3 | 30 | 6 | **42** | 3.9 | 2.6 |
| 7 : Food and food products | 4 | 7 | 18 | 1 | **30** | 2.8 | 3.0 |
| 8 : Freight shipping companies | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.0 | 0.4 |
| 9 : Hotels and travel services | 8 | 10 | 16 | 3 | **37** | 3.4 | 1.4 |
| 10 : Household equipment and supplies | 5 | 3 | 10 | 7 | **25** | 2.3 | 1.6 |
| 11 : Household furnishings | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | **6** | 0.6 | 1.0 |
| 12 : Jewellery, optical goods and cameras | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | **4** | 0.4 | 1.4 |
| 13 : Lubricants and fuel | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| 14 : Magazines and other publications | 22 | 43 | 15 | 6 | **86** | 8.0 | 11.7 |
| 15 : Office equipment and supplies | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | **6** | 0.6 | 2.0 |
| 16 : Retail Stores | 20 | 22 | 41 | 11 | **94** | 8.7 | 5.1 |
| 17 : Soaps, cleansers and polishes | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | **4** | 0.4 | 0.7 |
| 18 : Sporting goods and toys | 0 | 3 | 57 | 6 | **66** | 6.1 | 2.9 |
| 19 : Sweets, snacks and soft drinks | 21 | 16 | 43 | 1 | **81** | 7.5 | 6.7 |
| 20 : Tobacco products | 8 | 16 | 13 | 1 | **38** | 3.5 | 3.9 |
| 21 : Toiletries | 4 | 10 | 2 | 0 | **16** | 1.5 | 6.0 |
| 22 : Wearing apparel | 38 | 52 | 23 | 5 | **118** | 10.9 | 5.0 |
| 23 : Other | 39 | 57 | 213 | 27 | **336** | 31.2 | 4.2 |
| **TOTAL** | **211** | **270** | **517** | **80** | **1078** | **100.0** | **100.2** |
| Number of words in book | 67333 | 93515 | 95004 | 34444 | 290296 | | |
| **Brand Name Frequency Measure** | **31.34** | **28.87** | **54.42** | **23.23** | **37.13** | | |
| Number of brand name varieties in book | 117 | 141 | 145 | 44 | 366 | | |
| **Brand Name Variety Measure** | **17.38** | **15.08** | **15.26** | **12.77** | **12.61** | | |

# Shopaholic

| | A : The Secret Dreamworld Of A Shopaholic- (Shopaholic Book 1) (Shopaholic Series) | B : Shopaholic Abroad- (Shopaholic Book 2) (Shopaholic Series) | C : Shopaholic Ties The Knot- (Shopaholic Book 3) (Shopaholic Series) | D : Shopaholic & Sister- (Shopaholic Book 4) (Shopaholic Series) | E : Shopaholic & Baby- (Shopaholic Book 5) (Shopaholic Series) | F : Mini Shopaholic- (Shopaholic Book 6) (Shopaholic Series) | G : Shopaholic to the Stars- (Shopaholic Book 7) (Shopaholic Series) | H : Shopaholic to the Rescue_ (Shopaholic Book 8) (Shopaholic Series) | **TOTAL across Shopaholic Series** | **Percent** | **Percentage Frequency in Friedman's Corpus** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 : Automobiles | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 23 | 8 | 4 | 2 | **51** | 2.2 | 24.7 |
| 2 : Beer, wine and liquors | 4 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 0 | 1 | **29** | 1.2 | 6.6 |
| 3 : Building materials and equipment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **2** | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| 4 : Business services (financial, etc.) | 61 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 0 | 5 | **100** | 4.3 | 2.2 |
| 5 : Drugs and remedies | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 17 | 1 | 2 | **26** | 1.1 | 5.0 |
| 6 : Electronics | 5 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 57 | 13 | 5 | **93** | 4.0 | 2.6 |
| 7 : Food and food products | 7 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | **35** | 1.5 | 3.0 |
| 8 : Freight shipping companies | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **6** | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| 9 : Hotels and travel services | 12 | 13 | 93 | 4 | 15 | 15 | 6 | 30 | **188** | 8.1 | 1.4 |
| 10 : Household equipment and supplies | 4 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 11 | 3 | 6 | 3 | **36** | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| 11 : Household furnishings | 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | **20** | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| 12 : Jewellery, optical goods and cameras | 10 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 28 | 1 | **65** | 2.8 | 1.4 |
| 13 : Lubricants and fuel | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | **2** | 0.1 | 1.7 |
| 14 : Magazines and other publications | 59 | 31 | 32 | 18 | 61 | 18 | 27 | 4 | **250** | 10.7 | 11.7 |
| 15 : Office equipment and supplies | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 1 | **33** | 1.4 | 2.0 |
| 16 : Retail Stores | 62 | 71 | 74 | 65 | 31 | 40 | 18 | 9 | **370** | 15.9 | 5.1 |
| 17 : Soaps, cleansers and polishes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.0 | 0.7 |
| 18 : Sporting goods and toys | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 8 | 0 | **35** | 1.5 | 2.9 |
| 19 : Sweets, snacks and soft drinks | 15 | 18 | 8 | 11 | 25 | 8 | 10 | 10 | **105** | 4.5 | 6.7 |
| 20 : Tobacco products | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | **3** | 0.1 | 3.9 |
| 21 : Toiletries | 10 | 7 | 6 | 14 | 11 | 8 | 4 | 1 | **61** | 2.6 | 6.0 |
| 22 : Wearing apparel | 69 | 98 | 83 | 36 | 80 | 180 | 54 | 14 | **614** | 26.3 | 5.0 |
| 23 : Other | 22 | 10 | 12 | 3 | 28 | 61 | 45 | 26 | **207** | 8.9 | 4.2 |
| **TOTAL** | **346** | **283** | **339** | **203** | **333** | **477** | **228** | **122** | 2331 | **100.0** | **100.2** |
| Number of words in book | 92062 | 101161 | 114776 | 103915 | 108709 | 119899 | 121977 | 87760 | 850259 | | |
| **Brand Name Frequency Measure** | **37.58** | **27.98** | **29.54** | **19.54** | **30.63** | **39.78** | **18.69** | **13.90** | **27.42** | | |
| Number of brand name varieties in book | 153 | 134 | 111 | 77 | 149 | 168 | 111 | 64 | 572 | | |
| **Brand Name Variety Measure** | **16.62** | **13.25** | **9.67** | **7.41** | **13.71** | **14.01** | **9.10** | **7.29** | **6.73** | | |

# I Heart

| | A : I heart NY (I Heart Series, Book 1) | B : I Heart Hollywood (I Heart Series, Book 2) | C : I heart Paris (I Heart Series, Book 3) | D : I Heart Vegas (I Heart Series, Book 4) | E : I Heart London (I Heart Series, Book 5) | F : I Heart Christmas (I Heart Series, Book 6) | G : I Heart Forever (I Heart Series, Book 7) | TOTAL across I Heart Series | Percent | Percentage Frequency in Friedman's Corpus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 : Automobiles | 3 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | **26** | 1.1 | 24.7 |
| 2 : Beer, wine and liquors | 1 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 12 | 10 | 2 | **38** | 1.6 | 6.6 |
| 3 : Building materials and equipment | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | **3** | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| 4 : Business services (financial, etc.) | 8 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | **16** | 0.7 | 2.2 |
| 5 : Drugs and remedies | 4 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 14 | 9 | **49** | 2.0 | 5.0 |
| 6 : Electronics | 22 | 35 | 63 | 28 | 21 | 18 | 17 | **204** | 8.5 | 2.6 |
| 7 : Food and food products | 5 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 14 | **60** | 2.5 | 3.0 |
| 8 : Freight shipping companies | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **2** | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| 9 : Hotels and travel services | 8 | 25 | 29 | 47 | 15 | 3 | 5 | **132** | 5.5 | 1.4 |
| 10 : Household equipment and supplies | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 5 | **17** | 0.7 | 1.6 |
| 11 : Household furnishings | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | **5** | 0.2 | 1.0 |
| 12 : Jewellery, optical goods and cameras | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 5 | **22** | 0.9 | 1.4 |
| 13 : Lubricants and fuel | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** | 0.0 | 1.7 |
| 14 : Magazines and other publications | 3 | 9 | 8 | 14 | 10 | 5 | 13 | **62** | 2.6 | 11.7 |
| 15 : Office equipment and supplies | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | **9** | 0.4 | 2.0 |
| 16 : Retail Stores | 42 | 45 | 34 | 31 | 53 | 49 | 32 | **286** | 11.9 | 5.1 |
| 17 : Soaps, cleansers and polishes | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 2 | **12** | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| 18 : Sporting goods and toys | 4 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 16 | 8 | 10 | **45** | 1.9 | 2.9 |
| 19 : Sweets, snacks and soft drinks | 35 | 32 | 23 | 38 | 40 | 43 | 40 | **251** | 10.4 | 6.7 |
| 20 : Tobacco products | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | **1** | 0.0 | 3.9 |
| 21 : Toiletries | 17 | 14 | 10 | 17 | 14 | 5 | 4 | **81** | 3.4 | 6.0 |
| 22 : Wearing apparel | 69 | 86 | 93 | 86 | 99 | 65 | 69 | **567** | 23.6 | 5.0 |
| 23 : Other | 58 | 120 | 36 | 77 | 76 | 51 | 96 | **514** | 21.4 | 4.2 |
| **TOTAL** | **286** | **404** | **317** | **374** | **406** | **291** | **324** | **2402** | **100.0** | **100.2** |
| Number of words in book | 88504 | 93463 | 91807 | 92395 | 102479 | 97197 | 94266 | 660111 | | |
| **Brand Name Frequency Measure** | **32.31** | **43.23** | **34.53** | **40.48** | **39.62** | **29.94** | **34.37** | **36.39** | | |
| Number of brand name varieties in book | 129 | 158 | 117 | 203 | 223 | 139 | 174 | 705 | | |
| **Brand Name Variety Measure** | **14.58** | **16.91** | **12.74** | **21.97** | **21.76** | **14.30** | **18.46** | **10.68** | | |

Appendix J: Frequency Statistics for the Consumer Questionnaire

## Sample Profile: Demographics

**What is your gender?**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Female | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Which of the following age groups do you belong to?**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 18-24 | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

## Sample Profile: Reading Habits

**$ReadingFormat Frequencies**

| | | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | |
| Reading in the last 12 months[a] | Read a physical print fiction book (paperback or hardback) | 68 | 50.0% | 70.8% |
| | Read a fiction book on an e-reader | 8 | 5.9% | 8.3% |
| | Read a fiction book on a tablet | 10 | 7.4% | 10.4% |
| | Read a fiction book on a laptop | 15 | 11.0% | 15.6% |
| | Read a fiction book on a smartphone | 14 | 10.3% | 14.6% |
| | Read a fiction book on a desktop computer | 1 | 0.7% | 1.0% |
| | None of these | 20 | 14.7% | 20.8% |
| Total | | 136 | 100.0% | 141.7% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**$Genre Frequencies**

| | | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | |
| Genres read in the past 12 months[a] | General or literary fiction | 38 | 25.2% | 40.0% |
| | Crime, thriller, horror | 30 | 19.9% | 31.6% |
| | Science fiction, fantasy | 8 | 5.3% | 8.4% |
| | Graphic novel | 1 | 0.7% | 1.1% |
| | Romance | 43 | 28.5% | 45.3% |
| | Historical, mythological | 11 | 7.3% | 11.6% |
| | None of these | 20 | 13.2% | 21.1% |
| Total | | 151 | 100.0% | 158.9% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

# Angela's Personality

**Statistics**

| | | Angela: Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy) | Angela: Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold) | Angela: Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive) | Angela: Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed) | Angela: Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 96 | 96 | 96 | 95 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | | 4.15 | 5.30 | 3.52 | 4.14 | 4.89 |

**Angela: Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Disagree | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 19.8 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 21 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 41.7 |
| | Undecided | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 50.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 75.0 |
| | Agree | 22 | 22.9 | 22.9 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Angela: Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 7.3 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 18.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 30 | 31.3 | 31.3 | 50.0 |
| | Agree | 39 | 40.6 | 40.6 | 90.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Angela: Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 8.3 |
| | Disagree | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 25.0 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 31 | 32.3 | 32.3 | 57.3 |
| | Undecided | 12 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 69.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 19 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 89.6 |
| | Agree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Angela: Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Disagree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 11.5 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 27 | 28.1 | 28.1 | 39.6 |
| | Undecided | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 57.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 21 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 79.2 |
| | Agree | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Angela: Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional).**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 8.4 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 15.8 |
| | Undecided | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 28.4 |
| | Mildly Agree | 33 | 34.4 | 34.7 | 63.2 |
| | Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 30.5 | 93.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Attitude towards Angela

**Statistics**

| | | Angela: Unlikeable vs Likeable | Angela: Unpleasant vs Pleasant | Angela: Unattractive vs Attractive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 96 | 96 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 5.01 | 4.93 | 4.57 |

**Angela: Unlikeable vs Likeable**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Unlikeable | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | 2 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.1 |
| | 3 | 9 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 11.5 |
| | 4 | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 29.2 |
| | 5 | 30 | 31.3 | 31.3 | 60.4 |
| | 6 | 33 | 34.4 | 34.4 | 94.8 |
| | 7: Likeable | 5 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Angela: Unpleasant vs Pleasant**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Unpleasant | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | 2 | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 7.3 |
| | 3 | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 10.4 |
| | 4 | 22 | 22.9 | 22.9 | 33.3 |
| | 5 | 26 | 27.1 | 27.1 | 60.4 |
| | 6 | 33 | 34.4 | 34.4 | 94.8 |
| | 7: Pleasant | 5 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Angela: Unattractive vs Attractive**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Unattractive | | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | 2 | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| | 3 | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 15.6 |
| | 4 | 36 | 37.5 | 37.5 | 53.1 |
| | 5 | 20 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 74.0 |
| | 6 | 21 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 95.8 |
| | 7: Attractive | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Similarity to Angela

**Statistics**

| | | Angela: Not Similar at All vs Very Similar | I can identify with Angela in this story | I can easily put myself in the shoes of Angela in this story |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 95 | 95 |
| | Missing | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Mean | | 3.72 | 4.36 | 4.58 |

**Angela: Not Similar at All vs Very Similar**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Not Similar at All | 7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| | 2 | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 24.0 |
| | 3 | 21 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 45.8 |
| | 4 | 20 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 66.7 |
| | 5 | 20 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 87.5 |
| | 6 | 9 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 96.9 |
| | 7: Very Similar | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**I can identify with Angela in this story**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| | Disagree | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 16.8 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 28.4 |
| | Undecided | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 41.1 |
| | Mildly Agree | 34 | 35.4 | 35.8 | 76.8 |
| | Agree | 19 | 19.8 | 20.0 | 96.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**I can easily put myself in the shoes of Angela in this story**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| | Disagree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 15.8 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 24.2 |
| | Undecided | 13 | 13.5 | 13.7 | 37.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 28 | 29.2 | 29.5 | 67.4 |
| | Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.3 | 92.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Angela's Story – Unprompted Brand Recall

**$AngelaRecall Frequencies**

| | | Responses N | Responses Percent | Percent of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unprompted Recall - Angela's Story[a] | Marc Jacobs | 80 | 40.8% | 92.0% |
| | Harvey Nichols | 41 | 20.9% | 47.1% |
| | Next | 20 | 10.2% | 23.0% |
| | Bloomingdales | 40 | 20.4% | 46.0% |
| | Big Brown Bag | 7 | 3.6% | 8.0% |
| | False Positives | 8 | 4.1% | 9.2% |
| Total | | 196 | 100.0% | 225.3% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Statistics**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Angela's personality"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 |
| | Missing | 0 |
| Mean | | 4.00 |

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Angela's personality"**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | 2 | 15 | 15.6 | 15.6 | 16.7 |
| | 3 | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 33.3 |
| | 4 | 31 | 32.3 | 32.3 | 65.6 |
| | 5 | 20 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 86.5 |
| | 6 | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 96.9 |
| | 7: Strongly Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Bridget's Personality

**Statistics**

| | | Bridget: Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy) | Bridget: Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold) | Bridget: Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive) | Bridget: Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed) | Bridget: Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 96 | 96 | 96 | 96 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.27 | 3.75 | 3.95 | 2.77 | 3.04 |

**Bridget: Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 11.5 |
| | Disagree | 29 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 41.7 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 19 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 61.5 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 72.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 87.5 |
| | Agree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Bridget: Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| | Disagree | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 21.9 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 23 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 45.8 |
| | Undecided | 19 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 65.6 |
| | Mildly Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 90.6 |
| | Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 96.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Bridget: Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Disagree | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 19.8 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 21 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 41.7 |
| | Undecided | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 60.4 |
| | Mildly Agree | 23 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 84.4 |
| | Agree | 13 | 13.5 | 13.5 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Bridget: Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 14.6 |
| | Disagree | 37 | 38.5 | 38.5 | 53.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 21 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 75.0 |
| | Undecided | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 85.4 |
| | Mildly Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 94.8 |
| | Agree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Bridget: Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional).**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 8.3 |
| | Disagree | 29 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 38.5 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 22 | 22.9 | 22.9 | 61.5 |
| | Undecided | 27 | 28.1 | 28.1 | 89.6 |
| | Mildly Agree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 97.9 |
| | Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Attitude towards Bridget

**Statistics**

| | | Bridget: Unlikeable vs Likeable | Bridget: Unpleasant vs Pleasant | Bridget: Unattractive vs Attractive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 96 | 95 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | | 4.22 | 4.11 | 3.66 |

**Bridget: Unlikeable vs Likeable**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Unlikeable | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| | 2 | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 13.5 |
| | 3 | 20 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 34.4 |
| | 4 | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 53.1 |
| | 5 | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 78.1 |
| | 6 | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 95.8 |
| | 7: Likeable | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Bridget: Unpleasant vs Pleasant**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Unpleasant | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| | 2 | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 14.6 |
| | 3 | 15 | 15.6 | 15.6 | 30.2 |
| | 4 | 29 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 60.4 |
| | 5 | 19 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 80.2 |
| | 6 | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 99.0 |
| | 7: Pleasant | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Bridget: Unattractive vs Attractive**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Unattractive | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | 2 | 15 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 18.9 |
| | 3 | 23 | 24.0 | 24.2 | 43.2 |
| | 4 | 34 | 35.4 | 35.8 | 78.9 |
| | 5 | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 91.6 |
| | 6 | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 97.9 |
| | 7: Attractive | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Similarity to Bridget

**Statistics**

| | | Bridget: Not Similar at All vs Very Similar | I can identify with Bridget in this story | I can easily put myself in the shoes of Bridget in this story |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 96 | 96 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.13 | 4.08 | 4.17 |

**Bridget: Not Similar at All vs Very Similar**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Not Similar at All | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 18.8 |
| | 2 | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 43.8 |
| | 3 | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 62.5 |
| | 4 | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 77.1 |
| | 5 | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 88.5 |
| | 6 | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 96.9 |
| | 7: Very Similar | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**I can identify with Bridget in this story**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| | Disagree | 20 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 27.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 35.4 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 46.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 32 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 80.2 |
| | Agree | 15 | 15.6 | 15.6 | 95.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**I can easily put myself in the shoes of Bridget in this story**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| | Disagree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 21.9 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 12 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 34.4 |
| | Undecided | 12 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 46.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 31 | 32.3 | 32.3 | 79.2 |
| | Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 93.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Bridget's Story – Unprompted Recall

**$BridgetRecall Frequencies**

| | | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | |
| Unpromted Recall - Bridget's Story[a] | Warehouse | 76 | 20.8% | 84.4% |
| | Nicole Farhi | 47 | 12.8% | 52.2% |
| | Whistles | 51 | 13.9% | 56.7% |
| | Joseph | 38 | 10.4% | 42.2% |
| | Miss Selfridge | 73 | 19.9% | 81.1% |
| | Marks & Spencer | 74 | 20.2% | 82.2% |
| | False Positive | 7 | 1.9% | 7.8% |
| Total | | 366 | 100.0% | 406.7% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Statistics**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Bridget's personality"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 |
| | Missing | 0 |
| Mean | | 4.08 |

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Bridget's personality"**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | 2 | 13 | 13.5 | 13.5 | 14.6 |
| | 3 | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 31.3 |
| | 4 | 29 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 61.5 |
| | 5 | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 86.5 |
| | 6 | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 96.9 |
| | 7: Strongly Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Becky's Personality

**Statistics**

| | | Becky: Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy) | Becky: Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold) | Becky: Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive) | Becky: Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed) | Becky: Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 96 | 96 | 96 | 96 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 6.05 | 5.19 | 3.33 | 4.07 | 5.31 |

**Becky: Extraverted (that is: enthusiastic, sociable, assertive, talkative, active, NOT: reserved, or shy)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| | Undecided | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 4.2 |
| | Mildly Agree | 15 | 15.6 | 15.6 | 19.8 |
| | Agree | 46 | 47.9 | 47.9 | 67.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 31 | 32.3 | 32.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Becky: Agreeable (that is: kind, trusting, generous, sympathetic, cooperative, NOT: aggressive, or cold)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 12 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 13.5 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 25.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 26 | 27.1 | 27.1 | 52.1 |
| | Agree | 35 | 36.5 | 36.5 | 88.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Becky: Dependable (that is: organised, hardworking, responsible, self-disciplined, thorough, NOT: careless, or impulsive)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 16.7 |
| | Disagree | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 34.4 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 23 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 58.3 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 75.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 89.6 |
| | Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 92.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Becky: Emotionally stable (that is: calm, relaxed, self-confident, NOT: anxious, moody, easily upset, or easily stressed)**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 12.5 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 25 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 38.5 |
| | Undecided | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 56.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 27 | 28.1 | 28.1 | 84.4 |
| | Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 99.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Becky: Open to experience (that is: imaginative, curious, reflective, creative, deep, open-minded, NOT: conventional).**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 8.3 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 25.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 22 | 22.9 | 22.9 | 47.9 |
| | Agree | 36 | 37.5 | 37.5 | 85.4 |
| | Strongly Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Attitude towards Becky

**Statistics**

| | | Becky: Unlikeable vs Likeable | Becky: Unpleasant vs Pleasant | Becky: Unattractive vs Attractive |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 95 | 95 | 95 |
| | Missing | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Mean | | 5.31 | 5.23 | 5.69 |

## Becky: Unlikeable vs Likeable

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 2 | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | 3 | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 8.4 |
| | 4 | 16 | 16.7 | 16.8 | 25.3 |
| | 5 | 24 | 25.0 | 25.3 | 50.5 |
| | 6 | 31 | 32.3 | 32.6 | 83.2 |
| | 7: Likeable | 16 | 16.7 | 16.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Becky: Unpleasant vs Pleasant

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 2 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | 3 | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 4.2 |
| | 4 | 21 | 21.9 | 22.1 | 26.3 |
| | 5 | 30 | 31.3 | 31.6 | 57.9 |
| | 6 | 28 | 29.2 | 29.5 | 87.4 |
| | 7: Pleasant | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Becky: Unattractive vs Attractive

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Unattractive | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | 2 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |
| | 3 | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 3.2 |
| | 4 | 11 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 14.7 |
| | 5 | 17 | 17.7 | 17.9 | 32.6 |
| | 6 | 42 | 43.8 | 44.2 | 76.8 |
| | 7: Attractive | 22 | 22.9 | 23.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Similarity to Becky

### Statistics

| | | Becky: Not Similar at All vs Very Similar | I can identify with Becky in this story | I can easily put myself in the shoes of Becky in this story |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 | 96 | 95 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Mean | | 4.30 | 4.69 | 4.72 |

### Becky: Not Similar at All vs Very Similar

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Not Similar at All | 7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| | 2 | 9 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 16.7 |
| | 3 | 12 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 29.2 |
| | 4 | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 45.8 |
| | 5 | 29 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 76.0 |
| | 6 | 18 | 18.8 | 18.8 | 94.8 |
| | 7: Very Similar | 5 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

### I can identify with Becky in this story

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Disagree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 11.5 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 26.0 |
| | Undecided | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 36.5 |
| | Mildly Agree | 28 | 29.2 | 29.2 | 65.6 |
| | Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 90.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**I can easily put myself in the shoes of Becky in this story**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Disagree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 14.7 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 23.2 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 34.7 |
| | Mildly Agree | 27 | 28.1 | 28.4 | 63.2 |
| | Agree | 25 | 26.0 | 26.3 | 89.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Becky's Story – Unprompted Recall

**$BeckyRecall Frequencies**

| | | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | |
| Unprompted Recall - Becky's Story[a] | Moschino | 69 | 20.5% | 75.8% |
| | Barney's | 51 | 15.1% | 56.0% |
| | Calvin Klein | 76 | 22.6% | 83.5% |
| | Vera Wang | 79 | 23.4% | 86.8% |
| | Marks & Spencer | 59 | 17.5% | 64.8% |
| | False Positive | 3 | 0.9% | 3.3% |
| Total | | 337 | 100.0% | 370.3% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

**Statistics**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Becky's personality"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 96 |
| | Missing | 0 |
| Mean | | 5.53 |

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The brands mentioned in the story fit Becky's personality"**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 1: Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | 3 | 7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 8.3 |
| | 4 | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 14.6 |
| | 5 | 26 | 27.1 | 27.1 | 41.7 |
| | 6 | 37 | 38.5 | 38.5 | 80.2 |
| | 7: Strongly Agree | 19 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Prompted Brand Recall

**$PromptedRecall Frequencies**

| | | Responses | | Percent of Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | Percent | |
| Prompted Recall - All Stories[a] | Barneys | 77 | 7.5% | 80.2% |
| | Bloomingdales | 61 | 5.9% | 63.5% |
| | Burberry | 4 | 0.4% | 4.2% |
| | Calvin Klein | 89 | 8.7% | 92.7% |
| | Dolce & Gabbana | 4 | 0.4% | 4.2% |
| | Guess | 2 | 0.2% | 2.1% |
| | Joseph | 61 | 5.9% | 63.5% |
| | Harvey Nichols | 55 | 5.4% | 57.3% |
| | Karen Millen | 5 | 0.5% | 5.2% |
| | Marc Jacobs | 84 | 8.2% | 87.5% |
| | Marks & Spencer | 88 | 8.6% | 91.7% |
| | Miss Selfridge | 76 | 7.4% | 79.2% |
| | Moschino | 83 | 8.1% | 86.5% |
| | Next | 26 | 2.5% | 27.1% |
| | Nicole Farhi | 75 | 7.3% | 78.1% |
| | Top Shop | 1 | 0.1% | 1.0% |
| | Warehouse | 83 | 8.1% | 86.5% |
| | Whistles | 65 | 6.3% | 67.7% |
| | Vera Wang | 89 | 8.7% | 92.7% |
| Total | | 1028 | 100.0% | 1070.8% |

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

## Brand Attitudes

**Statistics**

| | | Barneys | Bloomingdales | Burberry | Calvin Klein | Dolce & Gabbana | Guess | Joseph | Harvey Nichols | Karen Millen | Levis | Marc Jacobs | Marks & Spencer | Miss Selfridge | Moschino | Next | Nicole Farhi | Top Shop | Warehouse | Whistles | Vera Wang |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 94 | 93 | 93 | 94 | 93 | 94 | 94 | 94 | 94 | 94 | 94 | 95 | 95 | 94 | 94 | 94 | 95 | 94 | 95 | 95 |
| | Missing | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Mean | | 4.28 | 4.58 | 5.43 | 6.15 | 5.24 | 4.38 | 4.36 | 5.67 | 4.40 | 5.71 | 5.41 | 4.29 | 4.65 | 4.84 | 3.74 | 4.14 | 6.11 | 4.47 | 4.96 | 5.42 |

## Frequency Table

**Barneys**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 4.3 |
| | Undecided | 71 | 74.0 | 75.5 | 79.8 |
| | Mildly Like | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 86.2 |
| | Like | 12 | 12.5 | 12.8 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Like | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Bloomingdales**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.2 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 5.4 |
| | Undecided | 52 | 54.2 | 55.9 | 61.3 |
| | Mildly Like | 12 | 12.5 | 12.9 | 74.2 |
| | Like | 22 | 22.9 | 23.7 | 97.8 |
| | Strongly Like | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Burberry**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.2 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 6 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 8.6 |
| | Undecided | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 11.8 |
| | Mildly Like | 36 | 37.5 | 38.7 | 50.5 |
| | Like | 30 | 31.3 | 32.3 | 82.8 |
| | Strongly Like | 16 | 16.7 | 17.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Calvin Klein**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Undecided | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Like | 16 | 16.7 | 17.0 | 20.2 |
| | Like | 37 | 38.5 | 39.4 | 59.6 |
| | Strongly Like | 38 | 39.6 | 40.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Dolce & Gabbana**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Dislike | 6 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 7.5 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 9.7 |
| | Undecided | 15 | 15.6 | 16.1 | 25.8 |
| | Mildly Like | 25 | 26.0 | 26.9 | 52.7 |
| | Like | 25 | 26.0 | 26.9 | 79.6 |
| | Strongly Like | 19 | 19.8 | 20.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Guess**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Dislike | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 8.5 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 15 | 15.6 | 16.0 | 24.5 |
| | Undecided | 28 | 29.2 | 29.8 | 54.3 |
| | Mildly Like | 21 | 21.9 | 22.3 | 76.6 |
| | Like | 17 | 17.7 | 18.1 | 94.7 |
| | Strongly Like | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Joseph**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 9.6 |
| | Undecided | 59 | 61.5 | 62.8 | 72.3 |
| | Mildly Like | 9 | 9.4 | 9.6 | 81.9 |
| | Like | 12 | 12.5 | 12.8 | 94.7 |
| | Strongly Like | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Harvey Nichols**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 17.0 | 19.1 |
| | Mildly Like | 17 | 17.7 | 18.1 | 37.2 |
| | Like | 34 | 35.4 | 36.2 | 73.4 |
| | Strongly Like | 25 | 26.0 | 26.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Karen Millen**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Dislike | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 8.5 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 17 | 17.7 | 18.1 | 26.6 |
| | Undecided | 28 | 29.2 | 29.8 | 56.4 |
| | Mildly Like | 18 | 18.8 | 19.1 | 75.5 |
| | Like | 14 | 14.6 | 14.9 | 90.4 |
| | Strongly Like | 9 | 9.4 | 9.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Levis**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Dislike | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 5.3 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.7 | 17.0 |
| | Mildly Like | 17 | 17.7 | 18.1 | 35.1 |
| | Like | 34 | 35.4 | 36.2 | 71.3 |
| | Strongly Like | 27 | 28.1 | 28.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 9.6 |
| | Undecided | 13 | 13.5 | 13.8 | 23.4 |
| | Mildly Like | 18 | 18.8 | 19.1 | 42.6 |
| | Like | 34 | 35.4 | 36.2 | 78.7 |
| | Strongly Like | 20 | 20.8 | 21.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marks & Spencer**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Dislike | 11 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 12.6 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 22 | 22.9 | 23.2 | 35.8 |
| | Undecided | 10 | 10.4 | 10.5 | 46.3 |
| | Mildly Like | 31 | 32.3 | 32.6 | 78.9 |
| | Like | 16 | 16.7 | 16.8 | 95.8 |
| | Strongly Like | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Miss Selfridge**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Dislike | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 9.5 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 13 | 13.5 | 13.7 | 23.2 |
| | Undecided | 15 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 38.9 |
| | Mildly Like | 27 | 28.1 | 28.4 | 67.4 |
| | Like | 24 | 25.0 | 25.3 | 92.6 |
| | Strongly Like | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Moschino**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.3 |
| | Dislike | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 11.7 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 17.0 |
| | Undecided | 17 | 17.7 | 18.1 | 35.1 |
| | Mildly Like | 24 | 25.0 | 25.5 | 60.6 |
| | Like | 25 | 26.0 | 26.6 | 87.2 |
| | Strongly Like | 12 | 12.5 | 12.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Next**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Dislike | 14 | 14.6 | 14.9 | 18.1 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 27 | 28.1 | 28.7 | 46.8 |
| | Undecided | 24 | 25.0 | 25.5 | 72.3 |
| | Mildly Like | 15 | 15.6 | 16.0 | 88.3 |
| | Like | 8 | 8.3 | 8.5 | 96.8 |
| | Strongly Like | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Nicole Farhi**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 6.4 |
| | Undecided | 73 | 76.0 | 77.7 | 84.0 |
| | Mildly Like | 9 | 9.4 | 9.6 | 93.6 |
| | Like | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Like | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Top Shop

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 5.3 |
| | Undecided | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 8.4 |
| | Mildly Like | 14 | 14.6 | 14.7 | 23.2 |
| | Like | 23 | 24.0 | 24.2 | 47.4 |
| | Strongly Like | 50 | 52.1 | 52.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Warehouse

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 6.4 |
| | Dislike | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 10.6 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 13 | 13.5 | 13.8 | 24.5 |
| | Undecided | 22 | 22.9 | 23.4 | 47.9 |
| | Mildly Like | 23 | 24.0 | 24.5 | 72.3 |
| | Like | 18 | 18.8 | 19.1 | 91.5 |
| | Strongly Like | 8 | 8.3 | 8.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Whistles

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 4.2 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 8 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 12.6 |
| | Undecided | 32 | 33.3 | 33.7 | 46.3 |
| | Mildly Like | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 58.9 |
| | Like | 20 | 20.8 | 21.1 | 80.0 |
| | Strongly Like | 19 | 19.8 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Dislike | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Dislike | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 4.2 |
| | Undecided | 21 | 21.9 | 22.1 | 26.3 |
| | Mildly Like | 16 | 16.7 | 16.8 | 43.2 |
| | Like | 35 | 36.5 | 36.8 | 80.0 |
| | Strongly Like | 19 | 19.8 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marc Jacobs – Brand Personality

**Statistics**

| | | Marc Jacobs: Trustful | Marc Jacobs: Reliable | Marc Jacobs: Persevering | Marc Jacobs: Creative | Marc Jacobs: Friendly | Marc Jacobs: Outgoing | Marc Jacobs: Active | Marc Jacobs: Adventurous | Marc Jacobs: Cool | Marc Jacobs: Simple | Marc Jacobs: Caring |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 94 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 91 | 92 | 93 | 93 | 93 |
| | Missing | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Mean | | 5.12 | 5.31 | 4.89 | 5.27 | 4.91 | 4.96 | 3.89 | 4.34 | 5.20 | 4.44 | 4.24 |

**Marc Jacobs: Trustful**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 6.4 |
| | Undecided | 22 | 22.9 | 23.4 | 29.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 28 | 29.2 | 29.8 | 59.6 |
| | Agree | 31 | 32.3 | 33.0 | 92.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs: Reliable**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Disagree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 5.4 |
| | Undecided | 15 | 15.6 | 16.1 | 21.5 |
| | Mildly Agree | 26 | 27.1 | 28.0 | 49.5 |
| | Agree | 40 | 41.7 | 43.0 | 92.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs: Persevering**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 9.7 |
| | Undecided | 31 | 32.3 | 33.3 | 43.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 20 | 20.8 | 21.5 | 64.5 |
| | Agree | 27 | 28.1 | 29.0 | 93.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs: Creative**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 13 | 13.5 | 14.0 | 16.1 |
| | Undecided | 6 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 22.6 |
| | Mildly Agree | 23 | 24.0 | 24.7 | 47.3 |
| | Agree | 35 | 36.5 | 37.6 | 84.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 15.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marc Jacobs: Friendly

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 10.8 |
| | Undecided | 22 | 22.9 | 23.7 | 34.4 |
| | Mildly Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 31.2 | 65.6 |
| | Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 31.2 | 96.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marc Jacobs: Outgoing

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.8 | 14.0 |
| | Undecided | 21 | 21.9 | 22.6 | 36.6 |
| | Mildly Agree | 21 | 21.9 | 22.6 | 59.1 |
| | Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 31.2 | 90.3 |
| | Strongly Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marc Jacobs: Active

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| | Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.9 | 14.3 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 26 | 27.1 | 28.6 | 42.9 |
| | Undecided | 22 | 22.9 | 24.2 | 67.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 16 | 16.7 | 17.6 | 84.6 |
| | Agree | 12 | 12.5 | 13.2 | 97.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 91 | 94.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 5 | 5.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs: Adventurous**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.6 | 8.7 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 23 | 24.0 | 25.0 | 33.7 |
| | Undecided | 15 | 15.6 | 16.3 | 50.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 27 | 28.1 | 29.3 | 79.3 |
| | Agree | 13 | 13.5 | 14.1 | 93.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs: Cool**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.7 | 12.9 |
| | Undecided | 10 | 10.4 | 10.8 | 23.7 |
| | Mildly Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 31.2 | 54.8 |
| | Agree | 28 | 29.2 | 30.1 | 84.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 15.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs: Simple**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.6 | 9.7 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 18 | 18.8 | 19.4 | 29.0 |
| | Undecided | 17 | 17.7 | 18.3 | 47.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.8 | 73.1 |
| | Agree | 21 | 21.9 | 22.6 | 95.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marc Jacobs: Caring**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 6.5 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 15 | 15.6 | 16.1 | 22.6 |
| | Undecided | 38 | 39.6 | 40.9 | 63.4 |
| | Mildly Agree | 18 | 18.8 | 19.4 | 82.8 |
| | Agree | 16 | 16.7 | 17.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marks & Spencer – Brand Personality

**Statistics**

| | | Marks & Spencer: Trustful | Marks & Spencer: Reliable | Marks & Spencer: Persevering | Marks & Spencer: Creative | Marks & Spencer: Friendly | Marks & Spencer: Outgoing | Marks & Spencer: Active | Marks & Spencer: Adventurous | Marks & Spencer: Cool | Marks & Spencer: Simple | Marks & Spencer: Caring |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 95 | 95 | 94 | 95 | 95 | 96 | 96 | 96 | 95 | 95 | 95 |
| | Missing | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Mean | | 5.99 | 6.01 | 5.32 | 3.42 | 5.66 | 3.35 | 3.50 | 2.95 | 2.66 | 5.76 | 5.80 |

**Marks & Spencer: Trustful**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |
| | Undecided | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 5.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 17 | 17.7 | 17.9 | 23.2 |
| | Agree | 43 | 44.8 | 45.3 | 68.4 |
| | Strongly Agree | 30 | 31.3 | 31.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marks & Spencer: Reliable**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Undecided | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 4.2 |
| | Mildly Agree | 18 | 18.8 | 18.9 | 23.2 |
| | Agree | 44 | 45.8 | 46.3 | 69.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 30.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marks & Spencer: Persevering**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 9.6 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 17.0 | 26.6 |
| | Mildly Agree | 22 | 22.9 | 23.4 | 50.0 |
| | Agree | 26 | 27.1 | 27.7 | 77.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 21 | 21.9 | 22.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marks & Spencer: Creative

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| | Disagree | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 18.9 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 44 | 45.8 | 46.3 | 65.3 |
| | Undecided | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 77.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 13 | 13.5 | 13.7 | 91.6 |
| | Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marks & Spencer: Friendly

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 4.2 |
| | Undecided | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 11.6 |
| | Mildly Agree | 25 | 26.0 | 26.3 | 37.9 |
| | Agree | 39 | 40.6 | 41.1 | 78.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 20 | 20.8 | 21.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Marks & Spencer: Outgoing

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 10.4 |
| | Disagree | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 28.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 34 | 35.4 | 35.4 | 63.5 |
| | Undecided | 12 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 76.0 |
| | Mildly Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 87.5 |
| | Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 99.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Marks & Spencer: Active

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 5.2 |
| | Disagree | 20 | 20.8 | 20.8 | 26.0 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 29 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 56.3 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 72.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 90.6 |
| | Agree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 99.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Marks & Spencer: Adventurous

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 11.5 |
| | Disagree | 21 | 21.9 | 21.9 | 33.3 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 44 | 45.8 | 45.8 | 79.2 |
| | Undecided | 8 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 87.5 |
| | Mildly Agree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 94.8 |
| | Agree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 99.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Marks & Spencer: Cool

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 15 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 15.8 |
| | Disagree | 35 | 36.5 | 36.8 | 52.6 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 28 | 29.2 | 29.5 | 82.1 |
| | Undecided | 8 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 90.5 |
| | Mildly Agree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 93.7 |
| | Agree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marks & Spencer: Simple**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 5.3 |
| | Undecided | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 10.5 |
| | Mildly Agree | 20 | 20.8 | 21.1 | 31.6 |
| | Agree | 41 | 42.7 | 43.2 | 74.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Marks & Spencer: Caring**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 3.2 |
| | Undecided | 8 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 11.6 |
| | Mildly Agree | 19 | 19.8 | 20.0 | 31.6 |
| | Agree | 37 | 38.5 | 38.9 | 70.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 28 | 29.2 | 29.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Warehouse – Brand Identity

**Statistics**

| | | Warehouse: Trustful | Warehouse: Reliable | Warehouse: Persevering | Warehouse: Creative | Warehouse: Friendly | Warehouse: Outgoing | Warehouse: Active | Warehouse: Adventurous | Warehouse: Cool | Warehouse: Simple | Warehouse: Caring |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 95 | 95 | 94 | 96 | 95 | 94 | 94 | 95 | 95 | 95 | 95 |
| | Missing | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Mean | | 4.56 | 4.58 | 4.32 | 4.30 | 4.45 | 4.13 | 3.64 | 3.77 | 4.15 | 4.45 | 4.25 |

**Warehouse: Trustful**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 4.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 7.4 |
| | Undecided | 40 | 41.7 | 42.1 | 49.5 |
| | Mildly Agree | 31 | 32.3 | 32.6 | 82.1 |
| | Agree | 16 | 16.7 | 16.8 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Warehouse: Reliable**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 4.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 9.5 |
| | Undecided | 35 | 36.5 | 36.8 | 46.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 34 | 35.4 | 35.8 | 82.1 |
| | Agree | 16 | 16.7 | 16.8 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Warehouse: Persevering**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 5.3 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 12.8 |
| | Undecided | 47 | 49.0 | 50.0 | 62.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 22 | 22.9 | 23.4 | 86.2 |
| | Agree | 12 | 12.5 | 12.8 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Warehouse: Creative**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 6.3 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 22.9 |
| | Undecided | 31 | 32.3 | 32.3 | 55.2 |
| | Mildly Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 30.2 | 85.4 |
| | Agree | 12 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Warehouse: Friendly**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 8.4 |
| | Undecided | 44 | 45.8 | 46.3 | 54.7 |
| | Mildly Agree | 31 | 32.3 | 32.6 | 87.4 |
| | Agree | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Warehouse: Outgoing**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 9.6 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 15 | 15.6 | 16.0 | 25.5 |
| | Undecided | 36 | 37.5 | 38.3 | 63.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 22 | 22.9 | 23.4 | 87.2 |
| | Agree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.6 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Warehouse: Active**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 6.4 |
| | Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.5 | 14.9 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 23 | 24.0 | 24.5 | 39.4 |
| | Undecided | 39 | 40.6 | 41.5 | 80.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 13 | 13.5 | 13.8 | 94.7 |
| | Agree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Warehouse: Adventurous

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 12.6 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.3 | 37.9 |
| | Undecided | 36 | 37.5 | 37.9 | 75.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 17 | 17.7 | 17.9 | 93.7 |
| | Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Warehouse: Cool

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| | Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 9.5 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 19 | 19.8 | 20.0 | 29.5 |
| | Undecided | 28 | 29.2 | 29.5 | 58.9 |
| | Mildly Agree | 26 | 27.1 | 27.4 | 86.3 |
| | Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Warehouse: Simple

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 2.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 11.6 |
| | Undecided | 42 | 43.8 | 44.2 | 55.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 31 | 32.3 | 32.6 | 88.4 |
| | Agree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 95.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Warehouse: Caring**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 3.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 12.6 |
| | Undecided | 50 | 52.1 | 52.6 | 65.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 27 | 28.1 | 28.4 | 93.7 |
| | Agree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Vera Wang – Brand Personality

**Statistics**

| | | Vera Wang: Trustful | Vera Wang: Reliable | Vera Wang: Persevering | Vera Wang: Creative | Vera Wang: Friendly | Vera Wang: Outgoing | Vera Wang: Active | Vera Wang: Adventurous | Vera Wang: Cool | Vera Wang: Simple | Vera Wang: Caring |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 92 | 92 | 91 | 93 | 92 | 93 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 91 | 92 |
| | Missing | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Mean | | 5.50 | 5.52 | 5.45 | 6.20 | 4.85 | 5.61 | 4.47 | 5.39 | 5.82 | 4.18 | 4.77 |

**Vera Wang: Trustful**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Disagree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 5.4 |
| | Undecided | 19 | 19.8 | 20.7 | 26.1 |
| | Mildly Agree | 18 | 18.8 | 19.6 | 45.7 |
| | Agree | 25 | 26.0 | 27.2 | 72.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 25 | 26.0 | 27.2 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Reliable**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.3 |
| | Undecided | 17 | 17.7 | 18.5 | 22.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 20 | 20.8 | 21.7 | 44.6 |
| | Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 31.5 | 76.1 |
| | Strongly Agree | 22 | 22.9 | 23.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Persevering**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 3.3 |
| | Undecided | 22 | 22.9 | 24.2 | 27.5 |
| | Mildly Agree | 16 | 16.7 | 17.6 | 45.1 |
| | Agree | 30 | 31.3 | 33.0 | 78.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 20 | 20.8 | 22.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 91 | 94.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 5 | 5.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Creative**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Mildly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| | Undecided | 8 | 8.3 | 8.6 | 10.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.5 | 17.2 |
| | Agree | 30 | 31.3 | 32.3 | 49.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 47 | 49.0 | 50.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Friendly**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 15 | 15.6 | 16.3 | 17.4 |
| | Undecided | 23 | 24.0 | 25.0 | 42.4 |
| | Mildly Agree | 23 | 24.0 | 25.0 | 67.4 |
| | Agree | 18 | 18.8 | 19.6 | 87.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 12 | 12.5 | 13.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Outgoing**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 1.1 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 5.4 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.8 | 17.2 |
| | Mildly Agree | 23 | 24.0 | 24.7 | 41.9 |
| | Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 31.2 | 73.1 |
| | Strongly Agree | 25 | 26.0 | 26.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 93 | 96.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 3 | 3.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Active**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| | Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.8 | 12.0 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 15 | 15.6 | 16.3 | 28.3 |
| | Undecided | 23 | 24.0 | 25.0 | 53.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 15 | 15.6 | 16.3 | 69.6 |
| | Agree | 17 | 17.7 | 18.5 | 88.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Adventurous**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 6.5 |
| | Undecided | 15 | 15.6 | 16.3 | 22.8 |
| | Mildly Agree | 25 | 26.0 | 27.2 | 50.0 |
| | Agree | 27 | 28.1 | 29.3 | 79.3 |
| | Strongly Agree | 19 | 19.8 | 20.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Cool**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 4.3 |
| | Undecided | 9 | 9.4 | 9.8 | 14.1 |
| | Mildly Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 15.2 | 29.3 |
| | Agree | 36 | 37.5 | 39.1 | 68.5 |
| | Strongly Agree | 29 | 30.2 | 31.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Simple**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| | Disagree | 12 | 12.5 | 13.2 | 15.4 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 24 | 25.0 | 26.4 | 41.8 |
| | Undecided | 17 | 17.7 | 18.7 | 60.4 |
| | Mildly Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 12.1 | 72.5 |
| | Agree | 16 | 16.7 | 17.6 | 90.1 |
| | Strongly Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 91 | 94.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 5 | 5.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Vera Wang: Caring**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| | Mildly Disagree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.9 | 14.1 |
| | Undecided | 36 | 37.5 | 39.1 | 53.3 |
| | Mildly Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.8 | 63.0 |
| | Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 26.1 | 89.1 |
| | Strongly Agree | 10 | 10.4 | 10.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 95.8 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 4 | 4.2 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

## Attitudes to Product Placement

**Statistics**

| | | It is unethical to influence readers by using brand names in fiction books. | I hate seeing brand name products in fiction books if they are placed for commercial purposes | I don' t mind if authors receive money or other compensation from companies for placing their brands in a fiction book | Brands mentioned in a fiction book, for which the author receives payment from a company, should be disclosed at the beginning of the book. | I have bought brands because I have read about them in fiction books. | I am more likely to buy brands I am exposed to in a fiction book than those I see advertised. | When I read fiction books, I pay attention to the brands they mention. | Readers are subconsciously influenced by the brands they read about in fiction books. | I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books. | I prefer to see real brands mentioned in fiction books rather than made-up brands. | The presence of brand names in a fiction book makes it more realistic. | The brands mentioned in fiction books are true to what the character would use in real life. | The government should regulate the use of brand names in fiction books. | The paid placement of brands in fiction books should be completely banned. | I think that when brands are mentioned in fiction books, it is usually a form of paid advertising |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 95 | 94 | 96 | 96 | 94 | 96 | 94 | 95 | 95 | 96 | 95 | 96 | 95 | 96 | 96 |
| | Missing | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 2.32 | 2.66 | 3.50 | 3.68 | 2.03 | 2.02 | 2.87 | 3.75 | 3.20 | 3.91 | 4.09 | 3.91 | 2.54 | 2.18 | 3.08 |

**It is unethical to influence readers by using brand names in fiction books.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| | Disagree | 64 | 66.7 | 67.4 | 73.7 |
| | Undecided | 15 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 89.5 |
| | Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**I hate seeing brand name products in fiction books if they are placed for commercial purposes**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 8 | 8.3 | 8.5 | 8.5 |
| | Disagree | 48 | 50.0 | 51.1 | 59.6 |
| | Undecided | 13 | 13.5 | 13.8 | 73.4 |
| | Agree | 18 | 18.8 | 19.1 | 92.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**I don’t mind if authors receive money or other compensation from companies for placing their brands in a fiction book**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 19.8 |
| | Undecided | 17 | 17.7 | 17.7 | 37.5 |
| | Agree | 51 | 53.1 | 53.1 | 90.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Brands mentioned in a fiction book, for which the author receives payment from a company, should be disclosed at the beginning of the book.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| | Disagree | 15 | 15.6 | 15.6 | 18.8 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 35.4 |
| | Agree | 38 | 39.6 | 39.6 | 75.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**I have bought brands because I have read about them in fiction books.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 35 | 36.5 | 37.2 | 37.2 |
| | Disagree | 34 | 35.4 | 36.2 | 73.4 |
| | Undecided | 13 | 13.5 | 13.8 | 87.2 |
| | Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.7 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**I am more likely to buy brands I am exposed to in a fiction book than those I see advertised.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 38 | 39.6 | 39.6 | 39.6 |
| | Disagree | 33 | 34.4 | 34.4 | 74.0 |
| | Undecided | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 85.4 |
| | Agree | 13 | 13.5 | 13.5 | 99.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**When I read fiction books, I pay attention to the brands they mention.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 17 | 17.7 | 18.1 | 18.1 |
| | Disagree | 22 | 22.9 | 23.4 | 41.5 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 17.0 | 58.5 |
| | Agree | 34 | 35.4 | 36.2 | 94.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 94 | 97.9 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 2 | 2.1 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**Readers are subconsciously influenced by the brands they read about in fiction books.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 11.6 |
| | Undecided | 15 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 27.4 |
| | Agree | 54 | 56.3 | 56.8 | 84.2 |
| | Strongly Agree | 15 | 15.6 | 15.8 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**I have learned about new brands from reading fiction books.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 9 | 9.4 | 9.5 | 9.5 |
| | Disagree | 25 | 26.0 | 26.3 | 35.8 |
| | Undecided | 12 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 48.4 |
| | Agree | 36 | 37.5 | 37.9 | 86.3 |
| | Strongly Agree | 13 | 13.5 | 13.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**I prefer to see real brands mentioned in fiction books rather than made-up brands.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 3 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 |
| | Disagree | 7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 10.4 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 27.1 |
| | Agree | 40 | 41.7 | 41.7 | 68.8 |
| | Strongly Agree | 30 | 31.3 | 31.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**The presence of brand names in a fiction book makes it more realistic.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Disagree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 4.2 |
| | Undecided | 8 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 12.6 |
| | Agree | 56 | 58.3 | 58.9 | 71.6 |
| | Strongly Agree | 27 | 28.1 | 28.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**The brands mentioned in fiction books are true to what the character would use in real life.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| | Disagree | 4 | 4.2 | 4.2 | 5.2 |
| | Undecided | 14 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 19.8 |
| | Agree | 61 | 63.5 | 63.5 | 83.3 |
| | Strongly Agree | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**The government should regulate the use of brand names in fiction books.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 13 | 13.5 | 13.7 | 13.7 |
| | Disagree | 34 | 35.4 | 35.8 | 49.5 |
| | Undecided | 33 | 34.4 | 34.7 | 84.2 |
| | Agree | 14 | 14.6 | 14.7 | 98.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 95 | 99.0 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 1 | 1.0 | | |
| Total | | 96 | 100.0 | | |

**The paid placement of brands in fiction books should be completely banned.**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 24 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 25.0 |
| | Disagree | 44 | 45.8 | 45.8 | 70.8 |
| | Undecided | 16 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 87.5 |
| | Agree | 11 | 11.5 | 11.5 | 99.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**I think that when brands are mentioned in fiction books, it is usually a form of paid advertising**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| | Disagree | 19 | 19.8 | 19.8 | 26.0 |
| | Undecided | 34 | 35.4 | 35.4 | 61.5 |
| | Agree | 35 | 36.5 | 36.5 | 97.9 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 96 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |